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ABSTRACT

The effects of divorce on children are the subject of this collection of eight papers by authors from several disciplines. The central theme of Albert Solnit's paper is that divorce means dissolution of the family as well as the marriage. The role of the courts in custody and visitation issues and the effects of conflicts on the children are described. The effects of divorce on the relationship between the child and the noncustodial parent are examined in Judith Wallerstein's study, which focuses on the relationship at three different junctures--prior to divorce, 13 months after parental separation, and 4-5 years after divorce. Adolescents' views and reactions to divorce are discussed by psychotherapist Lora Heims Tessman. Urie Bronfenbrenner discusses current developments in the structure and status of the American family. A longitudinal study of the effects of divorce on the social and cognitive development of children is presented in a study by E. Mavis Hetherington. Robert S. Weiss' article is based on data collected in a series of studies that examine the organizational changes of divorced single-parent households and the consequences of these changes for children. The effects of child care involvement on the lifestyles of young divorced men are explored in a study by Harry Deshet and Kristine M. Rosenthal. Finally, in a report by Nicholas Zill, the discrepancy between the clinical perspective and the findings of many field studies concerning the effects of marital conflict and divorce on children is analyzed using the results of a national survey of children. (Author/JA)

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CHILDREN AND DIVORCE

An overview of recent research

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Edited by Clifford Baden

Center for Parenting Studies
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Introduction

Frances Litman

Frances Litman is Director of the Wheelock College Center for Parenting Studies in Boston, where she is responsible for development of a wide range of courses, seminars, lectures, symposia and conferences addressed to parents and to professionals who work with parents. Mrs. Litman's current interests include balancing work and family life, and she has led workshops for community groups and consulted to industry on this topic.

Each year, two million children under the age of 18 are directly affected by divorce or marital separation. What do we know about these children? Do they and their families resemble the "traditional" two-parent family in most respects? Or are there identifiable variables associated with children of divorce that call for special attention and specific service programs?

In November 1978, the Wheelock College for Parenting Studies sponsored a two-day symposium on "Children of Divorce." The symposium brought together some of the most significant researchers and clinicians in the United States who had recently investigated the effects of divorce on children. Most of the papers presented at the symposium have been edited by their authors for inclusion in this volume.

The symposium was attended by 200 educators, psychotherapists, counselors, lawyers and others from around the United States and Canada who were concerned with children of divorced families. Their reactions and the many subsequent inquiries confirmed our belief that the topic is one of continuing importance. We are pleased now to be able to make these papers available to a wider audience.

Divorce and the Dissolution of A Family: "A Reality That May Not Be Ignored"

Albert J. Solnit

Albert J. Solnit, M.D., is Sterling Professor of Pediatrics and Psychiatry at Yale University, where he also serves as Director of the Child Study Center. Dr. Solnit has written numerous journal articles on child development.

The topics in this paper are developed in more detail in two books which Dr. Solnit co-authored with A. Freud and J. Goldstein, Beyond the Best Interests of the Child (New Edition with Epilogue) and Before the Best Interests of the Child, both published by the Free Press, New York, 1979.

The separation and divorce of parents is always experienced immediately by young children in those families as frightening and as a threat to their well-being, worth, and security. Of course, the words well-being, worth, and security are grown-up sayings. A two-year-old boy might communicate his fears through his behavior--by clutching his penis, by having trouble settling down at night, and by slipping back, at least temporarily, in his most recently acquired skills such as speech, body control, and attitude toward new experiences. A four-year-old girl whose parents separate might cry, have nightmares, and ask where Daddy is and when will he come back.

For the rest of their lives, children whose parents divorce when they are young will long to and make partial efforts to reunite their parents. This longing for unification turns up in subtle, disguised, and a wide range of persistently motivated behaviors. If we were living in a world governed by children's wishes and decisions, parents would not be allowed to separate, no matter how angry, incompatible, and unassorted they were.

From the adult point of view, there are three main reasons that divorce is a desirable and lawful alternative. First, as adults, entitled to adult privileges, they are encouraged and permitted in a free society to dissolve their marriage in order to manage their lives as they see fit.

Secondly, most conscientious parents, or at least one of them who is seeking a divorce, have decided that remaining married will be more disadvantageous for their children than the stress and risks that are confronted when the parents separate. Intuitively, or in a reasoned way, such parents feel that the cost to their children of not separating, whether the marital conflicts are quiet or noisy, violent or non-violent, are greater than those of divorce. Some parents will be concerned that their children will associate marriage with strife, unhappiness, depressive reactions, and with either a high level of tension or with a sense of despair and hopelessness.

Finally, if they are not persuaded that it is best for all concerned, many adults make it clear that even if remaining together would be least harmful for the children, they feel it is necessary and justifiable to put their own perceived best interests ahead of the children's best interests in regard to the marriage.

Ordinarily, the "best interests of the child" concept does not become activated or rise to usefulness as a guiding principle until and unless parental autonomy and the integrity of the family have ceased to be protective, i.e., to provide the nurturance and advocacy which our society expects from parents; e.g., that there are grounds on which to believe the child has been abandoned. In connection with divorce, "best interests of the child" as a guiding principle need not become guiding unless the parents cannot agree on the custody assignment.

If divorcing parents cannot agree on who should be the custodial parent, they disqualify themselves temporarily as being able to provide the care, maintenance, and guidance which is assumed to be provided by an intact family under the leadership of at least one, usually two, autonomous parents. In our forthcoming book, Before the Best Interests of the Child, the authors recommend that the court should assign an independent legal counsel to children whose divorcing parents cannot agree about who will be the custodial parent. Such parental disagreement at the point of separation and divorce temporarily disqualifies parents, at least in regard to who will continue on as the custodial parent.

When the court appoints an independent legal counsel for the child because the divorcing parents cannot agree about custodial assignment, the court is taking on briefly the role of custodial parent. The legal counsel will use experts to provide knowledge that will assist him in seeking the least detrimental alternative custodial assignment for the children.

A recent New England case (based on a composite of several cases) illustrates the need for such advocacy. After 12 years of marriage, a 37-year-old woman separated from her husband because of increasing incompatibility. Both parents sought custody of the children: a 10 year-old girl and a 5-year-old boy. Initially, the mother, an artist, moved out because she wanted the separation, whereas her 39-year-old husband, a businessman, was still strongly attached to his wife and wanted to keep the marriage intact. For the next 9 months, efforts at reconciliation failed; the children remained in the family home; and the mother visited them daily, also remaining involved in their school and health care activities as she had done before the separation. The father, a hard-working businessman and a busy community leader, hired a reliable housekeeper. He supported the open, flexible visitation that evolved during the separation. The mother suggested a compromise, initially. The boy would stay with his father and the girl would live with the mother. Soon the mother changed her mind, realizing that the children would gain more and lose less by remaining together, regardless of the custody decision. A competent child psychiatrist conducted a clinical evaluation in order to determine who would be the best custodial parent in serving the best interests of the children.

By a narrow margin the child psychiatrist decided the father would be the least detrimental alternative as the custodial parent. The mother did not accept this and a court date was set. The mother asked for another opinion by another expert, to which the father agreed. The second expert, a senior consultant, was asked to see the children. The second expert refused, saying that the observations of the first expert were more than adequate and that children should not be required to have multiple psychiatric interviews. He suggested that, if everyone agreed, he would review the fact situation and discuss it with the first expert consultant and see if he had anything to add or question.

This suggestion was acceptable, and the second clinical consultant reached the opinion that the difference between the parents as to who was most fit or who was least fit was not sufficient to make a recommendation. He based this conclusion on the limitations of our knowledge and methods when psychiatric interviewing is used, not for diagnosis or treatment, but for helping to decide about the placement of children when parents dissolve their family. The consultant recommended that the parents, realizing how fit each was, how human each was, how imperfect each was, should not allow a stranger, the Judge, to decide who should have custody. He pointed out how much better it would be for the children's sense of security and of worth if they knew the parents, on whom they were dependent, would decide for them.

This advice was not successful at that point and the court hearing was held. When the Judge heard that the senior clinical consultant had tried to help the parents reach a decision, rather than to leave it up to him, he was incredulous. He wondered if the expert's credentials were authentic since surely everyone knows that no one can get warring parents in a custody conflict to agree. He did allow the expert to explain why it would be much better for the children if the parents could, despite their conflicts, decide which parent could best serve the children's needs and best interests. Finally, the judge insisted that the clinical expert must realize and know in his expert heart-of-hearts that he preferred one parent over the other. The expert told him that both parents were devoted, conscientious, and above average--that he found the mother's sensitivity and intuitive responses more tuned in to the children; and that he found the father's ability to arrange for a secure and orderly reality in the everyday life of the children a bit more reliable and practical than the mother's ability in those areas.

Therefore, the consultant said that he would think that by the weight of a feather, the father would be a slightly better choice as the custodial parent, because his ability to welcome and arrange for the mother to have a continuing, meaningful relationship with the children through ongoing liberal and appropriate, frequent, and regular visitation was slightly better. The consultant concluded that this slight difference was insignificant compared to what those parents could do to improve the alternatives for their children by reaching their own decision and not leaving it up to the Judge, a stranger to the children, no matter how wise, sensitive, and concerned he was, to make the decision.

There was a mid-day interruption in the hearing. When it resumed the parents, through their attorneys, advised the Judge that in a lunch meeting the parents had agreed as to which of them would be the custodial parent. They had also agreed about visitation arrangements. The court approved their agreements.

The Role of the Clinical Expert

The role of clinical experts in child placement conflicts has been generally conceptualized in terms of being an advocate for the best interests of the child, but has not been sufficiently examined in terms of its specific functions and limitations. As with other adversarial processes, the lawyers will try to use clinical experts in the service of winning the case for one client or the other. In adjudications and dispositions concerned with child placement, there are usually two adults in conflict about the child's custody or placement; or the conflict may be between adults representing the State or a private agency and the biological or foster parents. Because of the simultaneous search for the best interests of the child and for equity between adults, the clinical expert is regularly invited and tempted to attend first to what is fair for the adults (those who are verbal and able to be their own advocates) and then to express an opinion about which of the available alternatives would be in the best interests of the child.

The temptation to become detective is especially clear and strong in child abuse cases, in which the allegations of abuse are denied by the parent or parents. Also, when the clinical expert attempts to decide the case rather than to answer the court's questions, he will be yielding to the temptation to become judge. If the court's questions are not clear, it is appropriate to ask for clarification. It is the expert's obligation to describe the child's relationships and tolerances in connection with the alternatives available to the child, as well as how these alternatives can be related to the child's current psychological ties and needs.

The clinical expert is confronted by a strongly held conviction in many of the courts that he cannot be expert about best interests of a particular child if he has not clinically interviewed and evaluated the child and the pertinent adults. In fact there are many placement conflicts in which the fact situation, past history, and the known alternatives available to the child are sufficient information on which the clinical consultant can respond as an expert to the questions raised about the child's placement. In such instances, the clinical interview may be used ritualistically as an irrational condition without which the clinical expert's knowledge and judgment will be discounted. Furthermore, clinical interviews and evaluations of children and the conflicting adults are often of limited value for two reasons:

(1) In such evaluations, there is often, almost always, a degree of involuntariness or coercion experienced by the child and conflicting adults since they sense or know (and should be informed) that the opinion of the expert will be used by the court to make, even to impose a decision about

which they are in conflict. This is in sharp contrast to the confidential setting and the use of clarifying insights and understanding that characterize the clinical expert's utilization of skills and knowledge to provide diagnostic counselling and therapeutic assistance. Diagnostic and therapeutic procedures are voluntary and confidential and are made available to the patient for him to use or to discard in seeking relief and in order that the patient can actively resolve his conflicts.

(2) The second reason is that clinical interviews and consultations with children and adults are conducted in a confidential setting. The security of confidentiality assures the patient that he is free to express his fears, wishes and feelings and that he is free to plan, to remember, imagine, dream, and understand without the discomfort or risk of exposure or of having a decision forced upon him. What has been said or communicated in one or two therapeutic sessions is a sample, not necessarily a decisive or fixed view of the patient's outlook or attitude in regard to a decision about placement. On the other hand, the use of such a sample of clinical observations and interviews in a non-confidential or coercive (court-ordered consultation) setting is often the basis of the clinical expert's effort to answer the court's questions.

If the limitations of the clinical expert's methods and knowledge in assessing the child's best interest in placement conflicts are understood and accepted, there should be less pressure to use clinical interviews and assessments.

Also the acceptance of these limitations could become the basis for using the expertise of the clinician to respond to more appropriate questions about placement, e.g., available psychological child-parent relationships, limits of continuity, and short-term predictions about alternatives available.

Throughout, the clinical expert will emphasize how the child's developmental status (chronological age and maturity of functions) is kept in mind as the assessment is carried out. Thus, the child's tolerance for separation from the parent at the age of two is much less than that of an eight-year-old child.

At the outset the clinical expert should make it as clear as possible that the child's preferences or wishes will be taken into account, but that the child will not be the one who decides. The decision is that of the authorized adult, namely that of the parents, or, if they can't agree, a judge, i.e., decisions are up to the adults, and should not be an unfair burden for the child.

If one were to raise the question, shouldn't the grounds for divorce include its desirability or undesirability for the children in a family? Would we want to consider the child's best interests in providing sanction or lack of sanction for a divorce? In this connection, many people seem primarily attracted to each other largely because they want to have children; and their interest in each other as spouse appears to be at least equal to their interest in each other as an adult who will become one of the parents for the children they wish to conceive, give birth to, and raise.

However, despite this hypothetical consideration, there would certainly be a good deal of outraged concern if in this era of our history the doctrine, "best interests of the child," would be the guiding principle in deciding whether parents were allowed to separate and divorce. This formulation calls attention to the meaning of license to marry, which is quite separate from the inherent right to have children and become parents without being licensed by the State.

This emphasis on parents having adult prerogatives forces into view two dilemmas confronting divorcing parents and their children. The first dilemma is the narrowing of adult's rights and expectations concerning their autonomy once they decide to divorce. The grounds for bringing them back into court in regard to custody and visitation are different than the grounds for bringing non-divorced adults into court because another adult has a complaint. It appears that the consequences of divorce are to alter the rights and autonomy of divorcing adults, especially those who are custodial parents. Conversely, the child's expectations of feeling permanent and secure with the custodial parent, i.e., being able to count on the autonomy of the custodial parent as a major source of security and permanent commitment is qualified once a divorce has taken place. Divorce seems to put divorcing parents and their children into a situation of less privacy and lower bars against the intrusive power of the State or courts.

Visitation

Although there are no precise figures about the percentage of divorces complicated by custody conflicts, there is general agreement that, because of practical reasons, the majority of divorces are carried out without a conflict about the custody of the children. In the minority of divorce cases with associated custody conflicts, no one is satisfied that our present system is trouble-free, especially in regard to visitation.

It is our conviction that parents should be encouraged and helped to work out plans for visitation with the custodial parent, rather than the court having the responsibility and authority for the control of visitation if parents are unable to agree about such decisions. The assignment of legal counsel to represent the child or group of siblings when parents cannot agree should assure respect for the child's sense of time and a voice for children's best interests, i.e., least detrimental alternative. This conviction rests on two prior requirements: (1) that significant weight be given in resolving the custody conflict to estimating, all other things being equal, which of the contending parents is more likely to encourage and to support visitation by the non-custodial parent in a constructive and sustained manner; (2) that once the court's decision is made about who will be the custodial parent, the grounds for change of custody would be no different for a divorced custodial parent than for the custodial parents in an intact (non-divorced) family.

These conditions could provide a different and more promising climate from the child's point of view for resolving custody conflicts and for promoting visitation on a sound and useful basis. Of greater importance would be the expectation that non-custodial parents would be more likely to seek visitation arrangements directly and in a more conciliatory manner. Current practices foster the use of the courts as an instrument of aggression against the custodial parent.

No system will completely protect the highly desirable goal of sound, sustained, nurturing visitation by non-custodial parents. These recommendations attempt to maximize the use of visitation in support of children's needs, development, and best interests, and to minimize the destructive effects of conflicted, hostile visitation in which the courts are used by divorced parents to continue their battles and to avoid accepting a least detrimental alternative for their children. In addition, as we have stated in Beyond the Best Interests of the Child, this practice would leave to the courts what they can and should do and encourages the state to curb access to the courts, which implies a promise of supervision that courts cannot and should not be allowed to make.

Recently (New York Times, June 9, 1978) Chief Judge Charles Breitel of New York's highest court, the New York State Court of Appeals, wrote, in connection with a request for a change of custody of two boys, "More than four years since their separation the parents are evidently still unable to manage their common problems with their children, let alone trust each other. Instead they continue to find fault and accuse. They have failed to work out between themselves even a limited visitation with the children."

Judge Breitel added, "Divorce dissolves the family as well as the marriage, a reality that may not be ignored." And yet there is a tendency to gloss over this reality and through rulings on custody and visitation to pretend that somehow what had been rendered assunder can be patched up. Just as children long for the parents to reunite, the State functions as though it intends to encourage and support continuing strife, instability, and uncertainty, especially for the children involved. In the case discussed and ruled upon by Judge Breitel, the lower courts had ordered joint custody in an effort to "save" what they erroneously and wishfully thought could be saved for the adults and children in the family that had been dissolved.

Responding to Judge Breitel's recent opinion for the New York State Court of Appeals, our Judge Baltimore whom we introduced in Beyond the Best Interests of the Child was stimulated to comment, "Judge Breitel has gone to the heart of the matter. Court-imposed joint custody is undesirable from the children's point of view, let alone its implications for the adults involved. However, I am even more impressed by Judge Breitel's comment that 'Divorce dissolves the family as well as the marriage, a reality that may not be ignored.' This reaffirms and makes clear once again why court-imposed visitation also cannot serve the best interests of the children. For in truth, court-imposed visitation is an effort by the judges to require divorced or separated parents to engage in joint efforts to maintain continuity for children with non-custodial parents. In fact, this has the same disadvantages as court-imposed joint custody. Visitations and other joint custodial arrangements that are enforced by the courts are unlikely to be useful to children and are more likely to '...enhance familial chaos....' Indeed, as Judge Breitel has so clearly put it for joint custody it can also be put for visitation, i.e., (joint custody) 'visitation is encouraged primarily as a voluntary alternative for relatively stable, amicable parents behaving in mature civilized fashion. As a court-ordered arrangement imposed upon already embattled and embittered parents accusing one another of serious vices and wrongs, it can only enhance familial chaos....To expect (such parents) to exercise the responsibility in sharing their children's (physical custody) visitation arrangements at this time seems beyond rational hope. It would, moreover, take more than reasonable self-restraint to shield the children, as they go from the ill feelings, hatred, and disrespect each parent harbors toward the other.' Judge Breitel continued, 'In this case, the gross conflict between the parents is so embittered and so involved with emotion and litigation that between them joint custody (or enforced visitation) is perhaps a Solomonic approach, that is, one to be threatened but never carried out.'"

Judge Baltimore concluded, "I am grateful to Judge Breitel for making so clear how the court-imposed joint custody and visitation exceeds what the courts can do in protecting the best interests of children. Perhaps we should refer to court-imposed visitation as an effort of the courts to order what it cannot supervise or assure, to insist on what can only work out well for children and parents as a voluntary collaborative effort. By ordering enforced visitation or part-time joint custody, the State insists that the child accept an alternative that is more harmful rather than least detrimental, an alternative that seeks to find equity for adults at the risk or expense of the children involved."

The Effects of Divorce on the Parent-Child Relationship

Judith Wallerstein

Judith Wallerstein, M.S.W., A.C.S.W., is a Lecturer at the School of Social Welfare at the University of California (Berkeley). Since 1971 she has been Principal Investigator of the Children of Divorce Project, an interdisciplinary study of the effects of divorce on children and adolescents, and has written extensively on that topic.

The paper that I am going to read is based on the findings of a study of 131 children from 60 families in Marin County in No. California. It is work that I have done with my colleague, Joan Kelley. The children were drawn from a normal population, were seen within a few months of the parental separation, not after the divorce. They were subsequently seen 13 months later, from the time of the parental separation, and then within 4-5 years after. I will be presenting findings from each of those three points today.

One legacy of divorce is discontinuity in the parent-child relationship. The many changes of the separation, the divorce, and their extended aftermath are reflected in unexpected and far-reaching changes in the relationship with both parents and illuminate not only the evolution of the post-divorce family, but also throw light upon the parent-child relationship as it occurs within the non-divorced intact family. The clinical setting provides an opportunity to bring to bear a powerful searchlight upon human behavior and enable us to learn about the spectrum of normal and psychopathological behavior by magnifying both psychological stress points and responses. Similarly illuminating, family disruption, by showing us where the lines of cleavage develop within these relationships, enables us to examine their nature more closely and to learn from these cleavage planes about family relationships under normal or less stressful conditions in which the component parts, being more firmly in place, conceal the nature of their inner workings.

Because discontinuity is most dramatically highlighted in the vicissitudes of the visiting relationship (which has no counterpart within the intact family), it is especially this relationship that I will address today - its prior history, its evolution into visiting status, and its various forms as crystallized five years down the road.

In order to examine divorce-related change, it is important to look back briefly at the relationships which obtained during the failed marriage and to hold these in mind as the baseline for the changes which ensue. Our findings in this regard are at some variance from commonly held conceptions. We learned that the parent-child relationship did not mirror the unhappy marital ties and that the stresses of the marriage did not necessarily spill over into the relationships with the children. It is evident from our finding that parenting can swing freely, relatively unencumbered by marital unhappiness - or more technically put, parenting can be maintained as a relatively conflict-free sphere of behavior within a very depriced and unhappy marriage. We were interested in this connection to discover that men who readily resorted to violence in response to their wives did not necessarily beat or even spank their children. Alternately, parenting can be used appropriately or inappropriately, to offset the marital unhappiness by cultivating an especially close relationship with one or more children. Or, as we have also found, the parenting capacity can be ruptured and destroyed by the anger and unhappiness of the adult in the marriage. In a significant number of conflict-ridden households, the parents were loving and supportive of the children's physical and emotional development. The quality of father-child relationships ranged from good enough to exceptionally good for at least one-fifth of the children. Similarly, the mother-child relationships were good enough or exceptionally good for one-third of the group. One quarter of the children had two committed parents. Furthermore, whereas a tiny fraction, only 5% of the married couples, were able to communicate well with each other, at least one-quarter of the fathers and one-third of the mothers were able to communicate very well with their children. Adults who disagreed strongly with each other around a great many issues were often able to cooperate in the care of their children. Child-rearing issues were not a source of disagreement for over one-third of the parents, and a high one-half of all the children experienced relatively consistent handling by both parents. We were sometimes surprised to find as a repeated occurence that two parents who related poorly to each other were able to share in the parenting and caring function and to maintain the other partner at his or her best as a parent. For a number of the couples in our study, the highest point of adulthood that they had been able to achieve revolved around their parenting relationship with their children.

At the other end of the spectrum, over 40% of the children had prior relationships with their father which were exceedingly poor, marked by gross psychopathology, and gross neglect. Some of these men were corrosive of the child's self-esteem. Others were physically or sexually abusive towards one or more children in the family. At least one-quarter of the mother-child relationships were also very poor, marked by serious neglect and threatened abuse. Where physcial violence occurred between the parents (and it occurred a great deal) children were usually not shielded and often were witnesses to the fighting. Physcial abuse between the parents, mainly beating of the wife by the husband, was an on-going part of the life for one-quarter of the children. Several children lived in terror in the families of habitual violence, worried whether one or both parents would be hurt by the other, or when the police would next be called upon to separate angry parents. Children were also often privy to the sexual acting out of one or both parents and provided the audience for the accusations and counter-accusations of promiscuity.

Children thus brought up in families where the marriages were failing experience a diversity of relationships, ranging from emotional restraint to bitter fighting and violence. Some families were isolated in lonely places. Others were nurturent and appeared harmonious. A good one-quarter of the children did not know their parents were unhappy in the marriage. Children from these different kinds of families thus came to the divorce with a different view of what was at stake, and varying ideas about what they stood to lose.

Although different custodial arrangements are emerging throughout the country, the dominant shape of the post-divorce families in the 70's is that of a custodial mother, with whom the children reside, and the father who has visitation rights. I will deal therefore with the custodial mother and the visiting father. However, I would like to stress that the characteristics which I describe are not primarily in my view sex-linked. Our experience points to their being tied only in part to the sex of the visiting parent, and just as much, and perhaps more so in this view, to the visiting role.

We begin with Wendy. A year after her parents spearated, 5 year old Wendy recognized the interviewer, greeted her warmly, and spent most of the hour playing a lively and exciting fantasy game she called "Wait till your Daddy comes home". The story involved very simply a household full of people, dolls in the doll house, all of whom kissed, jumped for joy and danced around with gay abandon when the Daddy doll came home. Wendy volunteered that she sees her Daddy a lot "because he loves us so much." She said he would return to live with them when he, the father, was all grown up. Noting a little ivory Buddha as she left, she rubbed his belly making a secret wish which she immediately confided to the interviewer that her father would return home. The child's fantasy was not nourished by the father's behavior toward her. Wendy's father visited infrequently during the year following the parental separation. Preoccupied with his own concerns, the father's interest in his children was clearly secondary. Wendy's mother, a highly competent businesswoman, worked full time as she had throughout the marriage. The children were cared for by a devoted housekeeper who was referred to on occasion as "Mommy." Nevertheless, the undiminished and perhaps intensified hope of the child for the return of the parted father emerges clearly in this vivid fantasy play. Powered by her passionate oedipal strivings which have continued in full force, and in fact become more intense since the father's departure, Wendy's statement that he will return when he is grown up mirrors her hope that she will live with him when she is grown up.

Seen again at age 7 by the same interviewer, Wendy had grown into a tall and graceful child. Asked for her three wishes, she responded gravely, "I would like to see you a whole lot more, I would like to see my Daddy a whole lot more, and I would like my Mommy and Daddy to get married again." The child's yearning for her father appears to have persisted, encapsulated by the ego achievement in growth of early latency, but essentially undimmed by time, and undiscouraged by the father's erratic and still infrequent visits. To Wendy and the other children we followed, visiting and the continued contact with the absent father were crucial issues both at the time of the separation and during the years that ensued. The parent-child relationship and its significance to the child outlives the marriage and continues during and after the divorce. By his presence or his absence, the visiting parent remains central to the psychological functioning of his children; and separation at a critical time in the child's development may indeed intensify the child's psychological tie and commitment to the relationship. A potent force links the child's self-esteem with continued contact with the father in the post-divorce family. At the 18 month mark and again at 4-5 years afterward, we found a significant connection between low self-esteem and depression in the child and continued disappointment with the father's infrequent and/or erratic visiting. Conversely, we found especially emerging at the 4-5 year mark a significant tie betwee high self-esteem, good ego functioning in the child and a good father-child relationship at that time. To most children, the father's visits soon represent the depth of his love and commitment especially in the early period following separation. The frequency of the visiting itself becomes a significant measure and the children kept careful count.

The departure of the father from the household is an extraordinary event. For the many children who feared abandonment by their father following the separation (and that was one-half of our sample), the continuity and frequency of the visiting had a very special significance, and provided the desperately needed assurance of the father's continued interest. For others, especially the younger ones, the departed father appeared to have a somewhat disembodied quality. Like the father of the Chagall paintings, he appeared to be hovering somewhere in space over the roof of the house, without fiddle and without joy. One 7 year old, who had been told that his father had moved to Oakland, worried for days, and finally confessed his profound confusion, asking whether Oakland was in Mexico and where indeed was Mexico. Therefore, for many children the visits from the father and the visits to the father to locate where he is in space and that indeed he is, and has a bed and a refrigerator, are immensely important in allaying the intense anxieties of the post-separation period.

Despite the urgency of the children's request for visiting and the intensity of their yearning, we have found an unexpected and striking discontinuity between the pre-divorce father-child relationships and what continues into the post-divorce period. The new visiting relationship, although presumably rooted psychologically in the prior relationship between father and child, often fails to reflect the continuity which psychological theory developed from the study of the intact family has led us to expect. Thus men who had been close to their children during the marriage, and had spent every weekend with them as close companions, failed to visit or arrived infrequently or irregularly. Conversely, previously distant fathers who had hardly acknowledged their children during the marriage or were frequently irritated by their presence began to visit with a regularity which surprised both their children and us.

We have come gradually to recognize the singularity of the visiting relationship that obtained between parent and child and also to understand some of its complex psychological determinants. As already stated, it has no counterpart within the intact family. Its parameters, its limitations and its potentialities are new and remain to be explored. There are many influences at work which affect the merging visiting relationship which are not present with the intact family. I will discuss several of these.

Following the marital separation, father and child face an abrupt discontinuity in their daily contact. Without rehearsal or guiding script, they need to adapt their feelings and the mutual needs of their relationship within the narrow confines of a visit. During the years that follow, the father-child relationship rests upon what can be compressed into this new limited form. Their success or failure to construct a relationship under the severe constraints imposed by the visit will determine the course of their future together. We conceptualize this process as a funnelling which requires complex and sometimes exquisite maneuvers from the several participants. The difficulties inherent in this compressive or funnelling process have been insufficiently appreciated, and if anything, the courts and embattled partners and their respective attornies have turned their energies to imposing restrictions and strict conditions which further encumber a relationship which under the best of circumstances needs care and encouragement.

The relationship is from the outset beset by practical problems of where to go, and what to do, and has the bewildering sense of no place to go and no idea of what to do. By the combined presence of children of different ages and colliding interests, by the absence of the mother who has often served as the interpreter of the children's needs, these practical problems seem at first insurmountable to many fathers. What to do with young children needing nurturing care or with older children who appear to need continual stimulation and entertainment in order to stem their restlessness. Some confused men change their entire routine for the children's visit. Others change nothing; and others, equally perplexed, expect the children to take full responsibility for the agenda. "I feel like a camp director," said one exhausted father. The broad parameters of this role were also unclear. To what extent is the visiting father a guest, a favorite uncle, or a parent? More explicitly, to what extent is the visiting father or parent to continue to take responsibility for setting behavior and moral standards? To what extent does he register approval or disapproval or enforce discipline or even homework? How can he do so without the built-in safeguards and bedtime rituals of intact family life, which mute disappointment and soften anger and provide safe channels for alleviating the inevitable conflicts and frustrations of the relationship? Hurt feelings are more likely to continue, and misunderstandings are more likely to remain unclarified. Men who are used to commanding their children experience a new sense of impotence and frustration. All of these complexities combine to keep the father's sense of who he now is unsettled and unsettling.

Many other factors also threaten this fragile relationship and generate stress. Children take on special significance at this time, as economic or psychological burdens whose presence is resented, and/or important sources of self-esteem whose reassurance is sought and whose absence is feared. As friends and needed helpmates, as counselors, as prizes to be fought over, as the only reliable allies in the marital battle, the complext dependence of adults on children for their self-esteem is especially apparent as fathers become vulnerableto their children in new ways which radically change the balance of the relationship.

One-quarter of the men were afraid of rejection by their children. They were worried about the children's disapproval and anger because of the divorce, and over one-third of both parents were in active competition with each other for the affection and loyalty of the children. Men were uneasy about what to do with their lovers at visiting time, and how this would affect both their children and the developing relationship with the woman. They did not know how to arrange for privacy in close quarters and they often failed abysmally to understand or to be aware of consequences of their own behavior or to anticipate the children's responses. Mr. A had a large waterbed in his apartment which he and his 7 year old daughter shared during her weekend visits. Occasionally when he invited a woman friend to join them, he peremptorily sent the child for the night to an adjoining room, replacing her with his friend. He was annoyed and mystified by the child's tearful protestations.

Visiting parents also found that the visit itself became an arena which readily evoked in both parents the ghosts of a failed marriage and the fantasies of what might have been. Raw feelings of both marital partners were exacerbated by these visits. The visit is an intense, multi-determined event which is continually available for replaying of anger, jealousy, love, mutual rejection, and longing between the divorcing adults. One-fifth of the women saw no use in the father's visits and actively tried to sabotage each meeting. This fighting between parents reached pathological and even bizarre intensity. One gently-bred matron, for example, smeared dog feces on the face of her husband when he arrived to see his children. One-third of the children were consistently exposed to intense angers at visiting times. The tension generated by the parents burdened the visit and stressed them and the children.

Parallel to the external complications of setting up the visiting pattern, subtle inner psychological forces had a profound influence on the nature and frequency of the visiting relationship and contributed to its fragility. Both the father's own psychological conflict and more important the father's feelings about the divorce were at stake. The father's role in the divorce decision (and we find no mutual decisions in divorce) and his eagerness for or opposition to ending the marriage were crucial factors in determining the future of the visiting relationship. Unlike what many children believe, the pattern of visiting immediately following the separation is not an accurate reflection of the father's love. On the contrary, what makes the visits difficult are the many psychological dilemmas of the father, not necessarily directly related to his feelings about his children. Men who were depressed following the divorce found it painful to visit their children and often did so irregularly or not at all. Their children rarely understood this and experienced this inconsistency as the father's lack of interest in seeing them. Because depression occurs frequently following divorce, this is a serious hazard to a continuing relationship. Fathers who have been rejected by their wives (and 75% of our divorces were sought by women) often expect the same from their children. Preoccupied with their own shame, grief, lowered self-esteem, with their own sense of expendability, such divorcing mend found their visits with their children deepened their depression by bringing back painful memories of the marriage and its disruption. Some depressed men lack the energy to mobilize themselves for the stressful demands of the visit. Visits occasionally brought a flare-up of somatic and other depressive symptoms such as increased drinking which lasted for days after the child returned home.

Men who felt consciously or unconsciously guilty at having ended the marriage had great trouble maintaining and initiating visits with their children. This group included fathers who had been devoted to their children and where in fact the pre-existing father-child relationship had had a special importance, because the deprivations within the marriage had brought father and children together to share the many activities. The father's guilt was often profound at having left an especially close father-child relationship. Others felt guilty at leaving their children with a psychologically-disturbed mother, or to pursue a different lifestyle or to pursue a lover. Guilt had a two-fold effect, leading either to a decline in visiting or to a gilt-ridden flurry following the marital separation, which was rarely sustained. It was not uncommon for guilty fathers to project their own self-blame onto the children, to magnify moderate misbehaviors of the children, and to find in these the justification for discontinuing the visits. One such father referred with irritation to the bourgeois values of his 5 year old child. This was a child he had cared for tenderly during the marriage.

All of these factors were counter-balanced by the passionate, persistent yearning of the children, especially those below the age of nine, by the commitment of many fathers, by the interest of about one-half of the women in maintaining the visits. Thus the visiting relationship which successfully outlived the marriage reflected not the relationship of the pre-divorce family, but the father's motivation, the children's motivation, and the psychological capacities of fathers and children to adapt flexibly to the new conditions of the visiting relationship. Men who could bend to the complex logistics of the visiting, who could deal with the anger of the women, the capriciousness of the children without withdrawing; who could involve the children in their planning, who could walk a middle ground between totally rearranging their schedule and not changing their schedule at all; men who felt less stressed and freer to parent were predominantly among those who continued regularly and frequently to visit.

Other factors played their role. The concern of men for children who were left in the care and custody of depressed or psychologically troubled women led some to visit more. Fathers who were lonely, psychologically intact, but not depressed visited more. Fathers with young children visited more. Fathers whose children were not angry at them visited more and fathers when the relationship between the parents had calmed down, and was no longer marked by intense animosity, tended to visit more. The mother's attitude towards the visiting was a factor of fading significance over time.

Finally, it is reasonable to assume that the interventions of our project played a significant role in encouraging the father to visit more and in facilitating the development of a better relationship.

The patterns that emerged 4-5 years after the separation are not concordant with the widespread community expectation that contacts between fathers and children tend to drop away steeply. Although the external dimensions of visiting, namely frequency and length of time spent together, do not capture the entirety of the parent-child relationship, nevertheless, such measures do provide a baseline for assessing continuity and change over the years. Most of our fathers continued at 4-5 years to visit their children. At that time, three-quarters of the fathers continued to reside within an hour's drive of their children. Less than 10% lived more than an hour away by air travel. One-quarter of the children were visited once a week or more. Forty percent were visited once a month or more. An additional 10% of fathers saw their children on vacations and holidays because of geographical distance. One-fifth of the children were visited erratically and infrequently, an average of once every six months or less. Eleven children had no visits at all. Over the four years there had been a general decrease but no precipitous decline. For a small group there was an increase over time. Most of the children were happy to visit with their fathers. A small group rejected the overtures and refused the visits. Overall, one-quarter of the children were continually disappointed by the father's disinterest, which they related to insufficient visiting on his part.

I will now turn to a brief consideration of some of the visiting parent-child relationships which emerge at the 4-5 year mark. At this point, it was apparent that the father-child relationships had settled into a number of patterns and that new factors had helped to shape these, with new consequences again for parents and children. At 4-5 years, it is not the visiting pattern itself which is of overriding importance any more, in part because the children themselves are older and the fear of abandonment is no longer central. What emerges, rather, at this time are two sets of considerations. Among those children who are visited, with whatever frequency or pattern, the issue is one of the extent to which the ongoing father-child relationship continues to contribute to the unfolding development of the child. In effect, to what extent and in what way is the visiting father still a parent and what kind of parent? Alternatively, are there visiting relationships which are destructive rather than helpful in impact or perhaps of little influence? Secondly, with children where visiting has diminished or even stopped, what is the impact of the absence of that particular relationship?

At the 4-5 year mark, we found several broad categories. Within the framework of the visiting relationship, many were good, but the majority were impoverished, or had failed to keep pace developmentally. Despite all the perils of the visiting parent-child relationship which I have presented, at the 4-5 year mark some 30% of the total sample of the children had fathers who played a significant parenting role in their lives. Lacking the full authority of the parent in the home, these men had by dint of sustained effort and capacity succeeded in earning or maintaining a respected place in their children's lives. Lacking both daily contact and direct authority to intervene, the role was limited compared with that of the custodial parent. Moreover, the role had its price within the second marriage of the father. But these men maintained a presence which could be used as a separate resource lending greater security to their children. These children in turn had made good developmental progress and had been spared the acute sense of rejection that other children suffered, with its other ramifying psychological consequences. The demands of this role were not easy. Most of these men were not only seriously committed to their children, but had the emotional maturity and the psychological intactness to perform well within this relatively ambiguous role. On the other hand, they were not necessarily psychologically astute or people of unusual sensitivity. Although the group included blue-collar workers as well as professional men, and many worked long hours during the week, none held two jobs and all had some leisure time to commit to seeing their children.

Perhaps most importantly from the viewpoint of the signficance especially to the older child and the adolescent, these men were able to build a relationship which by its nature supported the child's continued growth towards maturity and independence. By not binding the child to a prior dependency, and by establishing a new base for the relationship outside the confines of the family home, and by developing a relationship founded on a mutuality of shared interest and affection, these visiting fathers who were successful came to be identified in their children's mind with growing up. A goodly number of these children in fact modeled their career choices after their fathers. With the younger children, at best, the father provided a second home and supportive relationship which was often less stressful than that of the custodial parent. Shirley, an 11 year old pragmatist whose parents divorced when she was 7, reflected 4 years later about her parents' divorce. "I didn't want my parents to get a divorce, but they were unhappy so they probably needed it, but I get to see my Dad, so I don't miss him. It's not better, but it's not any worse." Shirley spent every other weekend at her father's home and called him or saw him informally in between. Actually, she and her father were much closer following the divorce than during the marriage, and she had some sense of sufficiency.

These men were of a mixed group in the history of their relationships with their children during the pre-existing marriage. Some had had close relationships with their children. Others had hardly known their children and had spent most of their time away from the household during the unhappy marriage and only began their close relationship with the children after the separation. Still others were galvanized into a new awareness of their children by their own anguish at the time of the marital separation, especially their sense of an impending loss of a relationship which they had before taken for granted. A small number found the very limits of a visiting relationship more congenial than the constant exposure of the marriage. In addition, some fathers were able to make a special effort to remain active in the lives of their children in conscious recognition of the distress and disorganization of the custodial mother. Where the custodial mother was not too distraught, the visiting relationship could be helpful and in a supplementary way help the children and provide her with relief. Given a more severely disturbed or disorganized mother, the constraints of a visiting relationship severely inhibited the help which the father could provide, however devoted his ministrations or frequent his visits.

A good father-child relationship within a framework of a visiting relationship is not sufficient in our findings to sustain the child's development, if the relationship with the custodial parent is poor. Even at its best, and some of these were very good, the role of the visiting parent remained psychologically secondary and supplemental. In almost one-half of the total sample, the relationships of the children with their fathers, all of whom were visited with varying patterns, had become emotionally less nutrient, offering little or no help to the children in addressing the complext developmental tasks of childhood and adolescence. Approximately one-half of these poor relationships had been poor during the prior marriage and just continued their previous course. But an equal number had ranged from outstanding father-child relationships to good enough patterns during the marriage and had deteriorated markedly in quality during the years that followed, despite the continuity of contact.

Ironically the visiting itself appeared to increase the possibility of fixation of the relationship to the mode and level which had been attained at the time of the marital rupture. Our findings suggest that somewhat less than half of these relationships had kept pace developmentally with the child's growth. In a goodly number of these high-contact but relatively improverished father-child relationships, child and parent continued to perceive each other as each had appeared at the time of the separation and to respond accordingly. Thus one father still held his 8 year old daughter on his lap at the dinner table as had been his custom when she was 3½ years old, at the time of the separation. We suggest that parent-child relationships that evolve within the matrix of the growing family are conducive to a more flexible growth than the visiting structure which can easily acquire a fixed and stereotyped quality. The visiting parent is often perhaps less perceptive or less interested in change or aware of change or may need to maintain the years at a standstill because of his own unresolved conflicts. The intensive time and space constraints in the visiting relationship, the absence of the modifying presence of the other parent, may create a climate which fosters a regressive relationship between parent and child, one which runs counter to the child's developmental needs.

Mr. C began visiting his daughter immediately following the marital separation. He was motivated in part by his genuine concern regarding the mother's disorganization and he saw his role as that of a stabilizing influence on the child. During the four years that followed, Mr. C visited every Sunday without fail. Seen at 13 years old, four years later, Kim referred to her father with emphasis and gigling as "My Daddy, he's so sweet, he's a cutey, I adore him, I could eat him up. I do everything for him, he's just perfect in everything he says and does." This child looked forward with high excitement to the weekly visits and dinner at a restaurant as the highlight of her week, which was otherwise without much interest for her in school or with her peers. She was immature in her general deportment and becoming increasingly obese. Some father-child relationships that we deemed poor, which continued that way during the post-divorce years were changed little from the form and quality of relationship that had obtained during the marriage. These fathers could not be reliably counted on, and on the other hand, they could not be discounted in the event of a pressing need or an emergency. They did not reject their children, but they remained somewhere in the background as inconstant figures. Although without significant parenting role, we found that they were somehow an important presence to these children who continued to be attached to them. They gave little, little was expected of them, and when they gave anything, it was greeted with great gratitude, and they were often held in real affection by their children over the years. Moreover, their continued presence, even if inconstant, served importantly for these children to ward off a sense of full loss and of consequent depression.

Six years following the divorce, we spoke with Edward, age 14, who despite the fact that his father had hardly been in the home throughout the marriage, told us "The divorce made me go bananas. I still wish it never happened. But I suppose not having all that yelling is better." Asked whether he sees his father much the boy said "Dad came up yesterday and took me out for a prime rib dinner." At that time, Edward had serious school problems, had just been arrested for shoplifting and apparently it had not occurred to him or to his father that any of these problems were subjects for discussion between them.

Children who are infrequently or not at all visited because of the father's disinterest or active rejection during the years following the divorce are likely to suffer with seriously diminished self-esteem. The great majority of these children (who amounted to one-quarter of the group) experience intense and continuing disappointment and their psychological development appeared to be severely burdened. The younger children were most vulnerable and many were depressed, showing different symptomatic behaviors including poor learning, pervasively sad affect, and obesity. At the 18 month mark, this response was seen primarily among boys, little boys especially below the age of nine. At 4-5 years, we found this response among boys and girls between 7-12 years old primarily. For the older children, the same connection between continuing disappointment and low self-esteem was present, but it was weaker. There seemed no question that the absence or disruption of contact with the father will exercise a chilling effect on the child's self-esteem. The most stressed were those children whose relationship with the father during the pre-existing marriage had been loving. Where the disruption occurred in what had previously been a close father-child relationship, the blow seemed an impossible one for the child to absorb. Young boys seemed to be the most vulnerable to this effect. Children altogether, however, not only children with good fathers, struggled hard to explain and to understand the father's lack of interest. They continued this yearning for many years. Some children employed poignant and vivid fantasies to fill the emptiness which they experienced in their lives and which took many, many hours of their time at school and at home. Others were bitterly angry, referring to their fathers caustically, "He has time for everything but me. I'm sure not waiting for him any more." Their anger spilled into their relationship with peers and teachers and at adolescence brought some into conflict with the law and into sexual acting out. The clinician reported of Bobby, age 8, that at the 5 year mark he had been seeing his father (who lived a few blocks away) irregularly, and sometimes only a few minutes at a time over the years. I asked Bobby if he was seeing his father. He looked blank and became suddenly vague and difficult to understand. A police car went by just then with the siren screaming. (Bobby's father is a policeman.) The child lapsed into a preoccupied silence. I waited a few minutes and suggested gently that the police car had reminded Bobby of his father. The child started to cry and continued to sob without stopping for a full 35 minutes. (This is 5 years after the divorce.)

Exceptions to this intense continued longing for the father sometimes occurred with these youngsters who felt rejected in the post-divorce family by a father who had badly rejected them, demeaned them, or abused them during the intact marriage. These youngsters sometimes had an easier road and then seemed able by their own efforts and with the help of a competent mother and sometimes a good step-father to strike out for themselves especially at adolescence with verve and independence, and to turn their back on their father and to counter-reject him. Where this occurred, the divorce was clearly beneficial in its physical separation of the psychologically disordered father from daily contact with his children. A central issue in the ability of such children to separate themselves from a traumatic relationship was in the capacity to consciously dis-identify with the father to recapture a sense of individuated psychic integrity and therefore a restored self-esteem.

The last category to be very briefly mentioned was a group of children in our sample who from their side rejected their father while he wished to visit them. These children shared the bitter anger of their mothers and we were impressed with the staying power of this anger over many years. Larry and his sister were both devastating as they mimicked their father's efforts to elicit their interest in visiting. Then, in sober reflection, Larry, now age 14, said "My father has to understand that when he shoots arrows at my mother they first have to go through our bodies before they reach her. Tell him there is no hope at all." This active rejection of parent by children is a relationship that is rarely seen in an intact family and this brings us full cycle to our conclusion.

I have in this all-too-brief review attempted to capture some of the salient points of the changing relationship with the non-custodial parent at three different junctures: in its diversity in the pre-divorced family, in the discontinuity associated with the complex funnelling process and psychological fragility of the visiting relationship and in the changed and changing diversities of relationships at the 4-5 year mark.

Working with Children of Parting Parents: Themes and Variations in Adolescents

Lora Heims Tessman

Lora Heims Tessman, Ph.D., is a clinical psychologist with the Psychiatric Services at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and maintains a private practice of psychology.

The topics in this paper are developed in more detail in the author's book, Children of Parting Parents, New York: Jason Aronson Publishers, Inc., 1978.

"I used to think my father would always be there when something important happened to me," said 15 year old Susan after her father remarried and moved away, "that he would be at my graduation, and my wedding, and my divorce . . . . "

Divorce is increasingly taken for granted, by adolescents and adults alike, as an expected rent in the fabric of marriage. It may be spoken of glibly, with sophisticated cool, or the kind of humor that is meant to protect one from hurt; or it may be mentioned with despair about the fragility of current human relationships. Susan seemed to assume it as inevitable in her own future life, just as it had been with her parents. Yet, we might notice that side by side with her assumption was a different hope expressed about her father: that he would be with her at important times, that their relationship was for always. It raises the question of how the adolescent views and reacts to parental divorce: what beliefs and attachments must change suddenly - or are suddenly recognized as changed after a period of slow erosion - and what parts of loving attachment between parent and child might still always be there, albeit in altered form. Immediately impinging on the adolescent are several issues: first, where do the needs of adolescent and divorced parent mesh and where do they grate in continued interaction with each other. Secondly, unlike younger children, for whom anxiety over separation or loss of care may be paramount after parental divorce, the adolescent is more concerned about the meaning that the parent's parting has for his own identity and life goals. Because he is at the beginning of the process of trying to establish an identity that goes beyond being like each of his parents in some way, he is especially vulnerable to disillusionment about them. This vulnerability is complicated by the loss of a parent, especially if the absent parent is also blamed for the divorce not only by the remaining parent, but by the broader human relationship network as well, leading to a sudden loss of his value in the adolescent's eyes. Although the increasing divorce rate is the "bad news," the "good news" is that the social context for divorce is changing in positive ways. Divorce is now more often a viable option for parents before bitterness has maimed the relationship to each other too much. It is no longer an act of just giving up, but more often viewed as a necessary, though painful step in order for one or both partners to lead a happier, fuller life. Social support for divorcing people is also making a significant difference. Affixing blame is decreasingly a prerequisite to justifying divorce. The single parent, when he is ready, is apt to be less isolated than in previous times, more involved in work interests and companionship, more apt to eventually remarry if he or she wishes it. This places less of a burden on the adolescent to feel he should assuage the loneliness of a parent, and in turn more often makes the parent able to hear distress signals in the adolescent which call for emotional support.

Today, I would like to comment on some of the salient issues for adolescents as they relate to divorce with illustrations taken from encounters with people I have seen for psychotherapy or briefer consultations. Some of this material is drawn from a series of 26 adolescents with whom I worked prior to 1976, and described at much greater length in comparison to 24 younger children of divorce (in the book "Children of Parting Parents"), while other material involves the adolescence of of adults I have seen whose parents were divorced. I mention the 26 adolescents I saw usually between six months and two and a half years after their parents' divorce because their difficulties became evident in a way that was noticeable enough to others so that it called for intervention. Many others may glide through adolescence without apparant distress, able to postpone the surfacing of unresolved problems until adulthood. Let me begin with such an example, a small complicated glimpse into the life of a divorced woman in her thirties, whose own parents were divorced and who has an adolescent daughter towhom she is an excellent parent.

She reported a dream during her therapy session following my return from a vacation: "I was in a boat - and saw a huge tidal wave coming at us. First I thought 'how exciting' until somebody said 'we're really in trouble'. Then I was trying to grab my kids out of the water - but I couldn't find Becky (her daughter) or see her. Then she was swimming by in a completely serene and competent manner. Finally I caught up with her and could hold her up and then I saw she was panicked and exhausted, saying something about thinking she would drown and die." Tears for her daughter came to the young woman's eyes as she added "It was just so sad that she should have to go through all that." I said, in view of her tears, "Who else is the girl who looked so serene and competent, not giving in to tears and sadness?" She wept then and told me "I guess I knew it was me somehow when I woke up, but when I was Becky's age I couldn't have let anyone know how I felt, not just because of mother counting on me to cope, I mean I knew it would have made her feel worse and she just couldn't have handled it. I couldn't have kept going, getting school work and things done that way either." She could then bring up the desolate feeling, in the aftermath of her parents' divorce, of having to cope with disturbing thoughts, like tidal waves, alone, a feeling which my absence during vacation had once more stirred up.

In working with children of divorce, I am regularly impressed not only by the many-sided alchemy of fears and sadness, but also by the amazing range of coping mechanisms, and at times the transformation of distress into either an enrichment of identifications, or fervor in ego-ideal leading to special pleasures in playing, creating, learning or loving, which in turn fosters further development. However, as mentioned, any look at the children's reactions is complicated by delay. That is, it may be many years later, as it was with the competent, warm-hearted and vibrant woman I quoted, before the reactions emerge, either safely or willy-nilly, in spite of the individual. Like with the daughter of her dream, this may be postponed until feeling securely held by a later relationship. With others, postponed reactions first unfold fully as a response to a later loss, at a time when adult love relationships recapitulate the love problems in the parents' marriage in a way that childhood growth does not.

I have started with the simultaneous image of coping and desolate distress for several reasons: to underline the complexity of trying to estimate the effects of divorce on personality from the adolescent's adjustment at any one time; to point to one of the common themes among children of divorce, that is, to gather one's resources after a period of time to cope well and even precociously "in reality" and yet remain vulnerable in a myriad of ways to the issue of loss in major love relationships; as well as to highlight the role of the human support network (in this case symbolized by the dreamer's own arms surrounding her daughter, who could then let her distress be seen). In reality, adolescent Becky developed genuinely well, with emotional support from both her parents.

Some paradoxes become evident in considering the effects of divorce, paradoxes which should properly fuzz our judgment in regard to criteria of mental health vs. pathology in order that we might consider particular patterns. Are there special talents as well as special vulnerabilities which appear disproportionately often in children of divorce? For example, the woman dreamer above, who would have been described as having a good latency and adolescent adjustment in spite of her later depressive vulnerability, developed a special talent which I have repeatedly noticed among some children of divorce, that is, she early developed an almost vigilant empathy about the emotional states of those who mattered to her, using this to maintain an excellent rapport with each of her parents, but learning habitually to isolate and hide the sense of emotional contact with one from the other. This mode of being attuned to both involved quite different self images stimulated by her awareness of the incompatably different emotional and cognitive styles of her two parents, with a finely honed ability especially to hide her admiring excitement with father, whom she saw only intermittantly, from the mother, who would have been hurt by it. Her vigilant empathy was highly adaptive in the particular speciality of law she practiced, as well as in the establishment of emotional intimacy with others, which she knew well how to enjoy. However, the defensive aspect was also central. When her efforts at maintaining emotional intimacy with a love partner were disrupted, she became highly anxious and depressed, with helpless anger at the possibility of what she called "surprises," that is, the then unpredictable nature of the other's mood and action, which she somehow fatalistically assumed would lead to a parting. Such is one echo of the fear of loss.

A similar empathic tendency characterized two adolescents in a quite different family setting. The children were in the shared custody of the parents, each of whom had remarried. All four parent figures were highly invested in parenting and the kids, who were wonderful adolescents, felt they loved all four. Yet these two felt emotionally drained too much of the time, not having enough energy to invest in peer relationships and independent adolescent pursuits. Each in different ways expressed guilt about having shorted a parent figure in his or her rights to equal "fathering" or "mothering" time. "They don't know how it is for us," said fifteen year old David, "They can be half-time parents but we're their only full-time kids, so as soon as you finish cleaning up the house and sitting through family council at Mom's house at the beginning of the week, you have to feel like doing it all over again at Dad's house three days later." Yet the children preferred this arrangement,found it to be the balm for the anguish they had felt around the time of the divorce and the sense of estrangement from one parent while they lived with the other initially for longer periods of time. This too was a style of coping, with some costs and rich rewards. Perhaps I have introduced my topic with themes belonging to developments primarily constructive and happy in order not to lose sight of these in view of the intense distress felt by many of the adolescents I saw shortly after parental divorce.

Before commenting further about adolescent reactions, as well as helpful interventions by teachers, counselors,and parents, let me anchor my discussion by listing the kinds of problems for which adolescents were referred and then their relation to adolescence and parental divorce. Although diagnostically the adolescents varied greatly, they shared a number of clinical features. With a few exceptions, referral occured between six months to two and a half years after parental separations. Seventy-seven percent of the adolescents had either lost a previous enjoyment of learning or were increasingly cutting and failing classes. Sixty-nine percent were overtly depressed, with or without somatic components. Many had conscious suicidal thoughts. A minority (31%) showed increased acting out with self-destructive components, but without conscious depression (e.g. one girl cut classes to "drag-race" at speeds she had told others "will kill you" and proceeded to have an accident, after which she was referred). Numbers of adolescents had run away for a time or initiated sexual activity with someone they did not really like. Phobias and generalized withdrawal were symptoms in other cases. There was a great range in the degree to which difficulties were transient or lasted over a period of years. An area of special focus at time of referral was often the question of "truthfulness." In 62% of cases a parent complained that the adolescent was "lying," "devious," or "playing with the truth." This tended to have special meaning in terms of the changing "truth" the adolescent was struggling with in his perception of himself, his parents, and so-called "morality" in the rest of the world. That is, the activity lied about often simultaneously hid and exposed a "truth," for it tended to mirror a piece of parental behavior or attitude which the adolescent now felt he had been duped about. Because the two parents, almost of necessity in terms of their own self esteem, have divergent views of the "reality" of why the marriage floundered, the many-sided "truth" is indeed difficult to maintain in the midst of conflict of loyalties, and ironically "lying" may be an act of integrity on the part of the adolescent, a truth about one parent which he feels is taboo in the eyes of the other.

Another common presenting difficulty was difficulty in making and maintaining friendships, of somehow being "unconnected" to peers (58%). Among these were adolescents who had had "best friends" at an earlier time, but not now. For others, however, friends were an important anchor ameliorating the sense of loss and discontinuity; the parents of friends and special connections to teachers became more important than usual as well.

In numbers of cases the sense of loss of a parent was heightened by a drastic change in status of the absent parent, as seen through the eyes of others. That is, if the divorce was associated with a parent's alcoholism, promiscuity, suicidal attempt, being fired from a job,or psychiatric hospitalization, or even simply being "a rotten bastard," the adolescent often had to cope not only with the reality of the changed or lost relationship to that parent but also with his devaluation, usually first by the remaining parent, but also in the wider human relationship network. In this situation the adolescent might remain fiercely loyal to the "fallen" parent by secretly or openly identifying with him, needing to share his fate as shunned, inconsolable,or on the road to some variety of ruin. According to the parents, such adolescents were more apt to behave like the absent parent than they had before the loss. When this took the form of behavior which was associated with the absent parent's disturbance, a number of adolescents expressed the feeling that they were "ruining" themselves, but did not know why.

These young people had in common the fact that during the pubescent period when it is usual to struggle with an internally altered image of the parent (in order to gain some independence from its emotional power over them), they were forced to face an actual change in one or both parents of proportions so major that they lost the reality of their previous image of, or relationship to that parent. This raises the question whether reality-based disillusionment at this age interfered with the process of internal decathexis and disillusionment with a more stable reality image, to which the relationship normally becomes changed in adolescence, but eventually not lost. Under the threat of actual loss of one of the identification figures, awareness of the disillusionment became too threatening. Most frequently the young people in this subgroup attempted to idealize their version of the parent. In those who were forced to acknowledge the unpleasant features of the parent, particularly when this included a "social" label, a severe depression tended to appear. In such cases, what was needed in addition to therapy was a response on the part of the human relationship network, including teachers, peers, and meaningful relatives,which made clear that the adolescent's attachment to that parent could still have value, even when not rosied over. That is, at that age, the adolescent cannot destroy the internalized image of a parent without feeling that the part of himself identified with that parent must be attacked as well.

Let me give you an example of this subgroup in relation to the issues discussed above, and then return to a discussion of some more moderate and usual reactions. Abbey: "I used to get pleasure in school when all of a sudden I understood something," said adolescent Abbey nostalgically, "but now the truth is like a hit on the head with a hammer." Her sense of painful assault by what she now knows as "truth" about herself and her world was expressed not only through her words, but also by an unbearable tension in her head, the temptation to jump off a bridge, a severe loss of appetite, inability to concentrate in school, and only an occasional sense of relief in promiscuity. The snowballing of her symptoms had been precipitated some time earlier when a phone call informed her that her brilliant, but alcoholic and promiscuous mother had been arrested and jailed for out of control, drunken driving, during which she had hit another car. Although Abbey's parents had long been divorced, and she had not lived with her mother since father had won custody of her when Abbey was eleven, she thought a great deal about her mother now. Abbey explained:

> "Usually I love to read and think, but now thinking really scares me. I'm afraid of some sort of evil spirit that's part of me - that would make me do what I don't want to. I'm afraid I'll jump off a bridge just to get away from that. But there is no place to go anymore - my aunt and uncle hate my father now - my uncle sort of convinced me that my father is kind of an ogre. When I hear about my mother, I got this pressure in my head - I can't seem to eat anything, and I really just want to die. My mother could have died in that accident, but she was the one who hit the other car."
>
> "And you said you were hit by the truth?"
>
> Abbey: "Yea, the only time I'm happy is when I'm asleep ... but now I wake up every twenty minutes and have these horrible dreams. All the things I've been told about my mother, I know they are true, but I also know they can't be that way. You should meet my mother - I wish you really could. She is really fantastic. She is beautiful and sparkling and charming and smart and my friends really always want to meet her when they hear about her from me." Tears well up in her eyes. "I think I miss her."
>
> "I think you do too, and what's happening with her, all the trouble she is having, needn't make you feel ashamed about missing her. What do you think it means to you, the things you feel about mother now?"
>
> Abbey: "I know I have to get my father to support me - and he can't be friends with me if I still think about my mother a lot. I think he thinks I'm like her, but my brother never has trouble. So I seem like I'm lying to myself all the time. I mean no one has really wanted to see how it is with me. I can be at the point of suicide and no one would want to see it. Once my aunt tried to tell me that there's a lot of good in me, that I'm really fantastic, but it was somehow like she didn't really believe it."

"What did you believe?"

> Abbey: "I mean, if I'm fantastic, how come I failed with my mother when I was still living with her. I remember I used to try to pour the liquor down the sink, but she would just get mad at that and get some more. But I didn't think it would come to this. Maybe she is just a thirty-nine year old baby, but she's wonderful, too. Nobody likes to see the truth because then they have to do something about it ... all the administrators really knew about it, but they all pretended it wasn't happening because that way they didn't have to do anything about it."

Abbey was capable of seeing the "truth" with a complexity she could not share with those around her. She knew that her mother was deeply upset and dangerously out of control, yet could be wonderful and lovable as well. Suicidal despair was something she had also seen in her mother during earlier periods in her life. However, the truth involved not only her mother's condition but also the web of family disappointments and animosities, which meant to her at that moment that she could find no refuge there with her own truth intact. Wisely, she linked facing the "truth" with a sense of responsibility for something about it, and thus with danger to those for whom the consequences would be a sense of helplessness or failure. At a time in life when an investment in valued life goals marks a turning from more passive dependence on to active mastery of the wider world, the "truth," in Abbey's eyes, would render her and the human network on which she depended helpless rather than "free."

One catches a glimpse, through Abbey's view, of some of the themes previously alluded to. Problems in her human relationship network begin with her father, who identifies Abbey with his former wife, now considered as out of control and hopeless about destructive and self-destructive tendencies. Abbey states he cannot like her as long as she thinks of mother a lot, hence he can't relate to Abbey as she is. She then broadens this not only to aunt and uncle, but to school administrators, who she thinks have trouble facing facts about her ("... they all pretended it wasn't happening because that way they didn't have to do anything about it.")

In her identifications both highly idealized and devalued components appear. Verbally she conveys how "fantastic - charming - smart - etc." mother is, and then uses the same word "fantastic" in regard to herself "quoting her aunt," but makes clear that Abbey considers herself a failure in this because "I failed my mother when I was still living with her." However, in her behavior she lives out another component of the idenfication through the promiscuity,etc. Also she says of herself "I just want to die" and of mother in the next sentence "My mother could have died in that accident, but she was the one who hit ... "

A quest for the once-loved mother spills through in her comment that "my friends always want to meet her when they hear about her" as well as her wish that I should meet her mother.

As she allows herself some tears with "I think I miss her" memories of life with mother come to the fore, with probably the beginning of a realistic evaluation that is "she is just a thirty-nine year old baby." With Abbey the first job was to attempt to repair the social network, for she needed a stable context in order to approach the difficult inner issues through psychotherapy.

In order to get closer to the topic of helpful interventions, I would like to turn to some common issues between adolescents and their divorced parents, as well as teachers, counselors,and peers. Many of the parents were aware that their divorce added stress to their adolescent children's lives but might also provide an opportunity for a more peaceful relationship. Some were finally free to separate the parent-child relationship from the tension between the parents, with a liberated sense of discovery. For most, the separation had not been sought lightly but was a result of many years of discouragement about the possibility of improving the marriage. Some had sought individual therapy, analysis, or marital counseling and had come to the conclusion that it was not possible to work out the marital problems. In this way they differed from most of the parents of younger children who consulted me, whose marriages were much more briefly invested and who had less feeling of already having lost out on other good opportunities in life.

In spite of major readjustment in their own lives, for better or worse, numbers of parents remained deeply tied to their children's welfare, willing to provide, when possible, the mixture of support and autonomy that would allow the adolescent to function at his or her best and to grow. Yet there were extraordinarily difficult moments. For example, parents were surprised and sometimes ashamed at the intensity of their reaction to the adolescent who disappointed, criticized, or ignored the parent for reasons of his own. For unlike young children, adolescents often attempted to take sides vigorously, expressing their disapproval, fighting, or running away from the parents they blamed for involving them in their problems. Since adolescents were often articulate and accurately perceptive about parent's behavior, their opinions were felt as those of another adult, more difficult to shrug off than a temper tantrum of "I hate you" from a four year old. The departure of one parent frequently resulted in a family dynamic in which previous interactions between spouses became projected in ambivalent fashion onto the adolescent. Most often an adolescent would feel pressured to become an ally, confidante, and emotional support to a parent, while thinly veiled reproaches toward people who had hurt one already lay in the air. The unspoken expectation was, "I suppose you'll be the one to hurt me next - or look down on me next," etc.

Yet the adolescent appeared to need some degree of withdrawal from parental conflict in order to keep a foothold on a future with personal hopes and goals. Interests shared with either parent (including education) were often turned against until this could be accomplished. At times this seemed like callousness to the parent, who often experienced simultaneously a fury at the child who criticized him or who no longer allowed himself to be controlled, and an intense sense of loss about the former relationship to the child. Though this a common phenomenon in parents of adolescents, it was complicated by the parent's increased need for emotional support and validation from the child.

The majority of adolescents were keenly aware of the unmet emotional needs of one or both parents. In some cases the child felt both compassionate and in conflict over sympathy for both parents positions, and slowly untangled his or her own sense of identify from those aspects of the parent which had led to their unhappiness. This pattern usually went with optimal development for the adolescent, leaving him open to new, enriching identifications with other adults (teachers and parents of friends) and peers as well.

However, once a child became definitely allied with one parent, there tended to be strong emotional pressure from that parent to maintain the intimacy. Such a pattern of "consoling alliance" provided temporary comfort, but often at considerable cost to further development. Several girls who remained closely tied to their mothers and her derogatory view of father during their adolescence, because they could not yet risk the dangers of losing their mothers' love and approval, renounced their independent identity in ways that led to catastrophic reactions expressed in suicidal ways and included violent rejection of their mothers in their early twenties. (Their treatment is described in "Children of Parting Parents.")

When the pressure to fulfill parental needs came more strongly from the opposite-sexed parent, defenses against such intimacy tended to appear earlier, that is, in mid-adolescence. Here is a brief example of Randolph, whose sexual liaison was also a disguised quest for his absent father.

When Randolph was fifteen, a sudden disruption in father-son camaraderie occurred when father revealed his love affair with a young woman and left home. Both mother and son felt openly reproachful and angry with the father, while the boy suppressed his grief and longing for his relationship with the man he had previously emulated. Both deeply hurt beneath their bravado, they consoled each other with assurances that they preferred each other's company to his. His mother now turned to him in an intimate way, making him aware of her emotional frustration, and her expectation that Randolph would be nicer to her than his father. She seemed upset when Randolph went out with his friends, letting him know how lonely she was. She hinted that father perhaps disdained Randolph, as he disdained her. At a time in his development when Randolph needed to avoid awareness of sexual feelings in regard to his mother, as well as needing a supportive male identification figure, he was in an intolerable position. During this time he expressed, in a social studies class in school, his belief that men always hurt women and that women asked the impossible of men. Randolph appeared to deal with his dilemma by increasing his identification with the mother; she and he were in the same boat of needing love from a male. Secretly, however, he would succeed where she failed, thereby also revenging himself for the high cost of harmony which he felt his mother had extracted from him - namely that he would no longer seek out or love his father.

After almost a year, Randolph began a homosexual relationship with an older boy, the son of his father's best fried. His lover's father, not knowing the sexual nature of the relationship, befriended Randolph also, and was the chief source of news about the father's current well-being, as well as of nostalgic details of the two men's adventures together when they were Randolph's age. To this man, Randolph revealed his longing to have had such adventures, too. The man and his son assuaged Randolph's uncertainty about being rejected by his father for a time, but did not solve his problems. Randolph abhorred girls as being too dominating and aggressive and felt deeply inadequate in their presence. However, he established a special friendship with two girls who were not romantically interested in him, but aroused his sympathy by telling him of their misfortunes with men. It was one of these girls, aware of his unhappiness, who brought him to therapy.

How then might a parent help with the issues of parental animosities and the wish for a consoling alliance? It is helpful for the parent to make clear, when this is so, that bitterness and disappointments in the marriage are real - else why would they have divorced - but that this does not mean either one of them is a failure or bad person. The limitations of each parent need to be faced truthfully by the adolescent, but through his own reality testing, rather than via interpretation by the other parent, with its implied pressure for loyalty and unconscious innuendo that if the child loves that other parent, something must be wrong with him or her too. Overt disagreements, which are natural and healthy between married parents, as well as between teachers or other adults in the adolescent's world, and which in fact are necessary for the child to learn that there is not just one right way to grow up, need not be hidden. It is the covert disagreements which are felt as insoluble tension. Thus to say, "Dad and I want different things out of life now, it doesn't make sense for us to stay together" or "Mom and I were having a lousy time, we couldn't seem to make each other happy any more and both resented that - that's why we fought a lot" is perfectly fine to say, while "we women have to protect ourselves from men because they can't be trusted" is not. Sharing the fact of trouble in the marriage openly, however, does not mean confiding details of sexual problems, which would be inappropriately stimulating to the adolescent.

The adolescent also needs to know that though a parent may be unhappy, it is not the adolescent's job to solve the parent's problems. Parental unhappiness is frequently guilt producing and worrysome not only in mid-adolescence, but for college-aged people who may feel they have deserted their parent more definitively. This is often a difficult tightrope to walk, because one of the benefits of divorce may be the discovery of delightful companionship with one's adolescent, a companionship good for both. The tightrope act is the avoidance of falling into wanting comfort and parenting from the adolescent, instead of remaining available and interested in the parental role oneself.

The issue of sexuality is extremely complex, and I will allude to it only briefly. The child's emerging sexuality often focuses anger and distress on a preoccupation with the sexual provocativeness of the adolescent. For example, daughters sometimes dressed more seductively in the apartments of their single fathers than before. Several divorced fathers found their daughter's bralessness difficult to endure. The parent may be unaware of how much his or her own dating simultaneously stimulates sexual fantasies in the adolescent who is exposed to it or expected to listen to descriptions. The period before a remarriage may be particularly difficult for both parent and child. It may symbolize a definitive turning away from each other, often with conscious anger and unconscious sorrow in both. For example, Erika's father, shortly after a happy remarriage, became tearful at the memory of his former close relationship with his daughter, who had become more aloof and rejecting of him. As he put it, he had, after all, divorced his wife, not his child. The remarriage was to a woman much younger than his previous wife, a woman who had become friend , companion, and advisor to the daughter, at times a refuge from battles with her mother. However, when the remarriage approached, it restimulated the girl's sense of being excluded rather than chosen by the father, and she reacted with anger as well as a firm, self-preservative insistance that she come to the wedding unwashed and in her jeans, feeling "like herself" and by throwing away the new dress provided for the wedding by her father, thereby further hurting her father's feelings. She sought out and then abandoned sexual encounters with boys, but after a period of time refused all contact with the father and thought of herself as lesbian. Erika was not in psychotherapy during these years. For adolescents who felt discarded suddenly by a parent, being loved or wanted was too easily equated with sexual activity and too often followed by a depression after the sexual activity turned out after all not to provide them with sustaining love.

Among other adolescents, heterosexual interests were often loaded with more than usual guilt toward their parents, almost as though they were abandoning an implicitly agreed on philosophy that men and women are fated not to make each other happy. There were different implications for adolescents who saw their heterosexual interests in terms of succeeding or having pleasures unavailable to the parent, and for those who viewed their own activity as a form of "revenge" toward the parent who had forsaken them for someone new. Often there was a double, contradictory message involved. Both parent and child engaged in flaunting, hiding, and expecting disapproval for such activity.

It was common for the young adolescent to express bitter jealousy about either a father's or mother's new spouse, particularly when witnessing their own parent's devotion to this person. Descriptions of a parent's indifference to or criticism of the adolescent were painfully coupled with disdainful references to the "idiotic gooey" looks which passed between the parent and new or prospective spouse. This process seemed to be most intense for those adolescents who were in the midst of attempting to renounce their own dependent or sexualized wishes for closeness to a parent at the same time when the parent was involved in previously unseen loving intimacy with a new partner. The witnessing of fresh scintillating sexuality in parents is a touchy issue for the young adolescent, though helpful in the long run. Noah, at fourteen, got so anxious when mother and step-father giggled together in the bathroom, next to his bedroom, that he first turned the radio on full blast to drown out the sound and then had to run out of the house. Seeing step-father in tight bathing trunks near mother elicited the same anxiety reaction. Interestingly, this particular anxiety faded at the same time he reported that "It crossed by mind that if I were an adult I wouldn't really pick either my mother or father to marry." In contrast, a number of older adolescents who had already achieved some genuine independence were relieved to find a parent "in love and happy again" often feeling this as a final permission to seek a good life themselves.

It was often useful, both for the child and prospective step-parent, to know that they could not be expected to love each other right away, or perhaps ever. Living within the same family, however, they would have to recognize the legitimacy of each other's needs and make some adjustments. If they then came to love each other, as many step-parents and children do, that would be a bonus to look forward to. When this was initially made clear it tended to reduce the guilt both child and step-parent were prone to feel if the relationship was less than ideal. When guilt over negative feelings developed in the child, who knew that his home parent wanted him to be nice to the new spouse, the child was apt to provoke fights with the step-parent to make him or her mad, in order to have a righteous cause to be angry with the step-parent in turn. With older children or adolescents I sometimes met with them, the parent, and prospective step-parent before remarriage in order to air some of such upcoming issues. If a good relationship between adolescent and step-parent became possible, enrichment of the adolescent's identification figures was an important gain.

Let me lastly turn to the impact of teachers, educators, and friends of the adolescent, for they comprise an enormously important part of the human relationship network which can either undermine or support the adolescent's effort to cope with distress.

Sustained individual friendships become of increasing importance in feeling "cared about" when the adolescent can avail himself of them. The particular friends chosen often provide a sensitive barometer of the adolescent's self-esteem. For a period of time he may be drawn only to others he views as deprived, excluded, or "losers" in some way, but eventually may change his choice of friends to those who are happier about life. Abandoning unhappy friends is, however, particularly guilt-producing for many children of divorce. In turn, in the late adolescence or early twenties girls who have not worked out their feelings about a divorced father are apt to live out issues about abandonment in their first serious love relationship in a particularly painful way. Their cry tends to include some version of "Why can't I make him love me any more?"

One of the most helpful avenues of support, in junior high, high school,and college settings is a peer rap group which meets regularly, either with or without an adult couselor. Surprisingly in this day and age, many adolescents still feel isolated, ashamed,and different about their particular parent's divorce and do not initially confide in friends. For example, Ralph who had made up tales about his absent parent's whereabouts for months, at eighteen reminisced about his parents' separation when he was sixteen. "I finally decided to stop tearing myself to pieces with guilt trips about my parents. I love both of them and who I live with doesn't prove anything. At first I tried to make everything come out equal, because they would put a guilt trip on me that made me feel like a pile of shit. Then I figured I couldn't be that bad, and I let them both know I won't take sides. Then it first happened .. for the first six months I just about told nobody .. I was careful especially about a girl I kind of liked. I was always afraid if I told I would cry . . . and then she would see what a mess I was and I didn't want that. If I had it to do over again, I guess I would tell someone. I kept wishing for a shoulder to cry on, but there wasn't any. I guess I wanted to be sure that I could pull myself together first. Later, when I did tell, I found out a lot of kids had the same situation, and we rapped about it at sailing club - and things began to feel better." Like Ralph, adolesccents in peer discussion groups frequently discover that they have many similar reactions about parental divorce and do not need to consider themselves "a mess" because of these. They discover they laugh at the same jokes, (the old fashioned "mother-in-law jokes" get replaced, at times, by "divorced Parent" and "shrink" jokes.) They trade useful ideas about the advantages and disadvantages of living in a single-parent household.

Relationships with the individual teacher and/or counselor have special value on many levels as well. Often it is best to let this develop naturally, with people the adolescent is drawn toward, rather than imposed. However, the adolescent is likely to test the mettle of these new models for identification, needing urgently to know how teacher or counselor compares to parent on a variety of subtle issues and aspects of interaction. Sometimes a teacher feels uncomfortably "over my head" when he or she perceives that there are sexualized undercurrents to the adolescent's involvement with him and may then be tempted to avoid all out-of-class contact with such an adolescent, thereby repeating the adolescent's experience of loss. I have found that when the identificatory and restitutional needs of the adolescent underlying the sexualization could be made clear to the teacher, frequently he or she could continue the relationship by responding to these issues directly and in a way which diminishes the sexualization.

Adolescents of divorced parents are also often particularly attuned to expecting or trying to provoke adversary relationships between adults. Again, it is good for him to witness enjoyably collaborative relationships between a man and woman including the process of coming to terms with open disagreements and including collaboration about the adolescent.

Numbers of adolescents express a sense of being demoralized through losing all interest in school, handing in blank papers, cutting classes,etc. It is important not to be "permissive" about these omissions in the sense of "overlooking" them, acting as if they have not been noticed. For example, cutting classes seems to have a variety of meanings for these adolescents, including the following: 1) it may be an expression of the feeling "it doesn't matter to you if I'm there or not"; 2) it may be an identification with the parent who has "taken off" ("If he can leave, I can leave too."); 3) it may have an unconscious meaning of a quest for the absent parent, while the conscious thought is "I must get away from this unpleasantness and toward something gratifying, which is out there somewhere"; and 4) it may be an attempt to avoid the feared breakthrough of disturbing thoughts, to which the adolescent is more vulnerable when sitting still in class or trying to do homework. Often there is anxiety attached to the idea that it was possible for a previously secure relationship to a parent to be lost out of the family, and one needed therefore to test out if the rest of the human support network would let one get "lost" too. It is important to establish with such an adolescent that an "absence" is quickly observed and reacted to as a problem, that indeed his presence is wanted. Regular brief appointments between child and guidance counselor, who each week receive data from all teachers involved with the child, and could discuss it with him, may be the first relieving step to ameliorate this issue. With adolescents of divorce I see in therapy I tend to have closer collaboration with teachers and counselors than is my habit, of course with the adolescent's knowledge and consent. Indeed it is often the teacher or counselor who is in the best position to note, if a parent does not, those signs of mood disturbance, inability to work or concentrate, rigid constriction while keeping a "stiff upper lip," withdrawal into social isolation, or compositions pre-occupied with suicide that may indicate the need for intervention. Again, it is helpful to be direct, letting the adolescent know that his unhappiness, blank paper, or whatever has been noticed, and that it matters. Analogously, the teacher's response to such adolescents' growth of individuality, playful humor, or excitement about life can be a beacon within the territory of relating anew.

The adolescent of divorcing parents often needs a combination of a human relationship network; a chance to reasses his family relationships in a way that is increasingly realistic without the need to devalue either parent or himself; a chance to recover from the trauma of loss by feeling the permission to grieve; and a chance eventually to witness as well as experience relationships fueled by a sense of joy and mutual appreciation, less haunted by insoluble antagonisms or sense of failure. While he needs both parents' continued care and interest, especially during early adolescence, he may also need the right to distance himself from his parents' problems without overwhelming guilt or worry about their well-being. Some periods of aloofness from either parent does not mean rejection; more often it is a protective disengagement that allows him to redirect his energies toward his own growth. In this process, sustained relationships to friends, teachers, counselors, and others outside the family have an important role.

Many adolescents adjust well to parental divorce, considerable change appears bearable, and is even at times the beginning of happier times with an added surrogate parent. For some children, however, longing for the absent parent remains unrequited, and may appear dormant, or as a disguised form of quest which can either add disturbance or excitement to later relationships and choice of life goals, or can lead to a debilitating renunciation of the self as worthwhile. Sometimes the memory of longing for an absent parent was left behind, and yet remained. Linda, who had insisted on sleeping in her father's bed for a whole year after he had left home when she was eleven, decided in adolescence that she wanted to have nothing to do with her father. She found herself writing this poem (after a suicidal gesture of night-walking into the ocean up to her neck):

"I will walk forever till I find you
It is too long the sun takes to rise
and fill the earth with warm and fragrant light.
Meet me on the path
From the depth of my spirit I call to you
Come with the rising sun."

Nine years later, in her twenties, while still struggling with issues of feeling deserted in love relationships, her knowledge of sorrow is muted, but not gone. She now writes:

"My past is light years away
but
still a small sorrowful self
is part of me forever."

Yet some of the children of parting parents highlight the essence of a paradox. They gained from their losses. Once knowing or feeling what they had lost, they explored what they had wanted. Sometimes cautious, impatient with pretext and wise before their time, they set out to rediscover what could be between people. Their search seemed easily marked by confidence or joy when their parent felt him or herself to be worthwhile.

Noah (at thirteen) made this prediction:

"I think my generation is going to have less divorce; there are so many kids with divorced parents now ... who know what it's like, that they'll be more careful."

"Like how?"

Noah: "Like about both things. That getting married at the time is what they really want - and that that's the very person they will want to be with."

"And you think they'll be better at feeling sure?"

Noah: "Yea, maybe because they won't be able to pretend so much. When they decide to get married they'll have to go through thinking 'How would this relationship end ... how would I feel?' ... I mean they can't pretend to themselves it can't happen, so, knowing that, they might care less about who would be to blame, and care more about how they feel."

Could it be that the father of Susan, with whom we began this talk, might not, after all, have to be at her divorce?

Alternatives to a Deficit Model for American Families and Children

Urie Bronfenbrenner

Urie Bronfenbrenner, Ph.D., is Professor of Human Development and Family Studies and of Psychology at Cornell University. Author of numerous articles on childhood and society, he was named Psychologist of the Year in 1978 by the New York Society of Clinical Psychologists.

This evening I would like to explore with you what may strike you as an unlikely possibility - that developments in the structure and position of the American family over the past several decades are about to change direction, slowly, but surely.

I am aware that the evidence is against me. As some of you know, I am one of those who keep score on what is happening to the American family. To remind myself of how ridiculous I was going to be, I checked the latest census report (for 1978), thinking it would be nice if, lo and behold, I had been the visionary and had been able to foresee what is now already in the new data. Well, it turns out that the new data are more of the same.

The age of first marriage has been postponed once more. Since last year, the increase in households composed of unrelated persons has again taken a marked jump, not only with respect to members of the opposite sex living together, but also to the main demographic change in American society, the greater number of persons living alone. The increase continues despite inflation. The decrease in extended families has continued and the number of the children in single parent families is still increasing. This last year was a landmark year in two respects: 1) this is the year that we passed the 50% mark for working mothers (they are now the majority rather than the minority), and 2) this is the year in which the United States became "number one" among industrialized nations for the rate of teenage pregnancy.

These have been the trends roughly since 1948, but they have been accompanied by another development, although there are not as many data about it. You are probably all aware of the much-publicized falling SAT scores and the fact that this is not limited to the college-bound: various testing programs have shown the same thing, despite the efforts of our most ingenious statisticians to make it go away.

But the most disturbing figures are those on juvenile delinquency. The census has now had to go to earlier age ranges in order to get in the drug traffic, homicide and, of course, school vandalism and violence. Literally, the handwriting is on the wall.

Yet I am saying all these things are going to change, going to turn around. Fool that I am! What's the basis of that really quite irresponsible prediction?

Let me first put myself out on a limb and say that the reason I mention the data on young children and data on families in the same breath is that, without being able to demonstrate it (because there has been no research that has done that kind of demonstration - there are not enough Mavis Hetheringtons in this world doing rigorous research in real life situations), it is my best judgment that there is a lawful relation between all these disruptive trends that are happening in the lives of families, on the one hand, and the disarray occurring in the lives of children. What I am implying is that those two are connected, which means that I am saying that there will be a change in what's happening to families which will in turn be reflected in higher reading scores on the part of kids. Very simplistic model.

Now, how can I arrive at such a simplistic answer to such a complex set of phenomena? Let me begin by suggesting that the process of human development can be thought of as a ping-pong game between an adult and a young child - joint reciprocal activity between two people who have an irrational attachment to each other. I propose that this is the basic way in which human beings become human. The process has its roots in a biological reality, a period of dependency in which we learn basic motivation skills. Here the dyad is absolutely fundamental. Therefore, if there has been a breakdown in the functioning of developing human beings, it must somehow reflect a breakdown in that dyad.

Now I begin to become a little less orthodox, leaning on Mavis's work to suggest an idea which might seem a bit novel. I have already indicated that I regard the dyad as a basic structure for human development, but now I am going to suggest that there is an even more fundamental unit than the dyad. Without it, the dyad can't continue, the ping-pong game gets all fouled up. That unit is a three-person system. For the dyad to function, it has to be validated by some third party, assisted, spelled-off. Dyadic interaction between a child and adult is a rough game. It is also a very rewarding game, regardless of who plays it - whether it is a mother and a child, a father and a child, a teacher and a child, a neighbor and a child. It is a complicated, highly-skilled game, especially tough on grownups. You need to have somebody on the outside who will say, "Hey, hang in there. Give'em the back hand. Let me spell you off for a while." I think Mavis has beautifully documented what happens when that third part is not there. She has also documented that it does not have to be that way - that there are some divorced families in which the process of making human beings human seems to be going quite well.

And she asked under what circumstances. As it turns out, there are two conditions: one more important - first, that the divorced father still hangs in there, not so much in terms of what he is doing with the kid, but in terms of being a partner in relation to the common concerns that the mother has with respect to the child. There was also a second solution that Mavis documents: in the absence of the fathers, it could be some other third party -- a relative, a friend, a neighbor - somebody. In short, a three-person system is important because it enables dyads to work.

Let's note that there are all kinds of instances of three-person systems and that the mother-father-child triad is only one example. I was particularly struck by this in doing research overseas, because I became aware that in many other societies the use of the third party was much more common than it is in our own. Somebody would always be going with children somewhere; wherever you went there was always an escort. We Americans get paranoid about that: "They're policing us, they're watching us, they never let us alone." The notion is that when you are going to a strange place, the human thing is for someone else to go with you; third party makes the bridge to a new setting. "Would you mind going with me, I have to go to the Welfare Office, I have to see my lawyer?" Of course you know our reaction: "Well, what's the matter with you, can't you go by yourself? What do you need me for? Stand on your own feet."

I am now entering the main theme of my remarks this evening. I'm suggesting that three-person systems are very important in any setting, not just within the home -- in any setting in which there is a growing human being -- and a growing human being is anybody, of any age. There is a functional utility to having three parties involved, so that the two who are engaged in the major action can have the blessing of the third. By "blessing" I do not mean just the words: I mean something to help it along - say, "Hey, that's fun what you're doing"; or the neighbor who meets you on the street and says, "I saw your son today, what a lovely young man." I use the analogy of a three-legged stool. If one leg is broken or shorter than the others, it tips over more easily. A stable system requires three supports.

Not only does this principle apply within any setting like the home, day care center, or school classroom, but it also applies in relations between settings. The evidence is not in, because we do not do those kinds of studies. But I am persuaded that one of the reasons why the American school has become a major breeding ground of alienation is because it has been placed outside the community, way far away out there. The only way you can get there is on a bus on which no one is allowed to ride except the kids; and the only adults allowed in are those with Master's degrees. It is an isolated island out there.

It is now possible in the United States to graduate from high school at the age of eighteen, never having done a piece of work on which someone else depends. It is also possible to graduate from a high school in the United States at the age of eighteen, male or female, never having held a baby in your arms, never having had to care for someone who is sick, never having comforted someone who is lonely, never having visited anybody in a hospital, never having more than three minutes of conversation with an old person. Consider the deprivation that implies for the development of a competent and compassionate next generation. Small wonder that increasing numbers of young people are living by themselves. Living with others is a skill. If you do not get practice, you do not know how to do it.

I'm suggesting that it is so difficult for a school to teach these days not because we do not have dedicated teachers, not because we do not have superb instructional materials, not because we lack or fail to apply excellent principles of teaching and learning. The worst education system I have ever seen in my life was in the People's Republic of China. Absolutely abysmal. Fifty kids in a classroom, rote recitation, repeat after me, Lin Piao and Confucius have polluted the world, gobbledy, gobbledy gook. Yet my colleagues and I were unable (and we did try hard) to find any kids who could not read, to find kids who did not hold their heads up. We looked for hyperactive kids, apathetic kids; we finally broke down and began counting sniffling noses -- and we ran out of those. You ask yourself, "How come?" Such a poor teaching system. Furthermore, they have to work in several languages at once, because for most of the kids the language of instruction is not the language of the home, since the schools employ "standard dialect" (what used to be called Mandarin). The written characters have nothing to do with what you speak, so you have to learn those, and to do that you use Latin script. All this happens in the first grade. How do the kids learn in all that linguistic confusion?

Well, they do learn. When I asked myself, "How come?", the answer I think was reasonably clear: in every classroom, in addition to those fifty kids and the teacher and all this gobbledy gook I've been telling you about, there would be retired workers, the products of the "age of bitterness," who were there to teach crafts and skills, and to describe what it was like then, what it is like now, the golden present, the gruesome past. They were figures of dignity who also held their heads up. Then there were also the People's Liberation Army, right in the classroom. The PLA person loves every growing thing, and that means flowers and vegetables and kids. They too were right there saying, "Learn to read, come with me." The links between the school and other settings - the home, the community, the workplace - were just all over.

It is the principle of interconnectedness. It is not what is happening within the school that determines whether you learn; it is the existence and nature of interconnections between the school and the other settings in which you live your life that make school worthwhile. I suggest to you that it is not exclusively a Chinese phenomenon. It was not too long ago that we in the United States had terrible schools and classrooms along these line, but they were much more closely related to the local community and there was consensus between the community and the school, between the family and the school. They both believed in that awful system. I am suggesting that the capacity of the school to teach depends in a very fundamental way on whether there is consensus between the home and the school.

Now I would add also that if the classic triad within the home is the mother-father-child kind of triad (this is very square talk about triads), what is the analogue in the three settings out there? Clearly the family is one. Clearly the day care center-preschool-school is the other. The third, and in my view the most critical in terms of what happens to families and children in this country in the next decade, is the workplace. ABT Associates has just completed an absolutely magnificent study, in my judgment, on the conditions in day care that make human development possible. Why I like it is that they have a lot of evidence to suggest that it takes "the ping-pong game." So I am very pleased about that. But as I was leaving ABT to come to this dinner, our host was saying, "There are two cabs outside. One is your cab; the other is bringing up my supper." All those guys are knocking themselves out for children every night. Their kids are home, while they are working for children at the office, turning out this study that is going to make life better for children. Please understand I am not knocking ABT Associates. That's what I call "the American blueprint," as it has been up to now, and I am maintaining this evening that it is changing.

Why do I say the workplace? Here, for once, there are some data, coming out of a pilot study that we have been carrying out in five countries. We use an interview, to identify the sources of stress and support perceived in the environment of families with young children. We simply ask parents what are the circumstances in their lives that make it easy or hard to be the kind of parents they want to be. It turns out that the most intensive source of stress - and it won't surprise you at all - the most intensive, not the most pervasive, is money.

The second and more pervasive source of stress is more widespread: conditions at work, especially time schedules. "How can I work out a schedule so I can be there when my kid comes home from school?" "I wish I could take sick leave when my child is ill." These are the things that parents are talking about "What about the sources of support? What was number one?" I did not expect the answer nor did my colleagues: "My kids, you know, if it weren't for my kid; that makes it all worthwhile." That was number one, and number two, not quite as important but right up there, was the availability of satisfactory child care arrangements.

Toward the end of the interview, we asked "What about you yourself? Is there anything about you as a person that makes it easier or harder for you to be the kind of parent that you want to be?" Interestingly enough, people who described themselves as irritable, or tired, tended to be the same people who are not able to get satisfactory child care arrangements. Conversely, people who liked themselves and their kids were also happy with their child care arrangements. We can't prove causality from these kinds of associations, but they are suggestive.

I propose that the capacity of any setting to foster human development depends on the degree to which that setting is supported by other settings in the society. When such support is not provided, the original setting begins to squeak and fall apart. I suggest that this is what has been happening in our society -- in the case of families, in the case of schools, and in the case of neighborhoods, for the neighborhood cannot remain alive if nobody is there during the day -- so neighborhoods are becoming places of danger. This is one of the major sources of stress for parents; I recall interviewing one father who asked me to change seats so he could be by the window. "I have to sit here all day whenever my kid is outside. It's just too dangerous out there. I don't let her out unless I can sit here."

The question arises, "How come we have let the social fabric fall apart to this extent?" One answer is that we have focused our attention elsewhere. We are busy doing other things, like working overtime. Another answer has a longer history. As De Tocqueville pointed out more than a century ago, we are a very individualistic society. It is hard enough for us to get connected in the family, let alone connect families with anything else. We are independent. We are a nation made up of immigrants who were rebels from all over. We could not tolerate interference there, having other people mind our business, so we all came over here so we could "do our own thing," as we say. Well, there is a lot of strength in that, and that's what made our nation great. I'm not knocking it. But, there is a point where we need to get some balance in these matters and I am suggesting that we have gone beyond that point.

Closely related with the concept of individualism is another American predilection. Locating the sources of problems "out there" is not our way of looking at it. In our view, the fault lies within the person. If you succeeded, well, congratulations, we knew you had it in you. And if you failed, you didn't have what it takes: today we have built a whole industry on this principle. We can find a learning disability in just about everybody. We have a whole technology for doing that, because we know that it is there. Even if you don't succeed in finding that learning disability, that's all right, because if the child is not the problem, then it's the parent who is not doing things right. If it is not the parent, then it's the group that has been deprived. In every case the task is to diagnose the problem and then try to correct. This is the deficit model. Moreover, we institutionalize it, and make it a moral issue. "We're perfectly willing to help you. But first you have got to admit you failed." For example, the welfare system is based on the principle that in order to get help you have to demonstrate that you are inadequate.

I am not asserting that this is the only or even the primary theme in our kind of society. But it is one of them.

For reasons that I do not have time to go into this evening, (that's my way of saying that I really don't understand), we have been riding that particular value awfully hard lately, that is, in the last ten years or so. The "do your own thing" business. It is difficult for us to do a turnaround, because it's immoral to do a turnaround. You shouldn't help somebody; it makes them dependent. So we proceed to help people by making them dependent, by having them declare themselves inadequate.

Yet, I have said I see a prospect that this will turn around. Where do I get that notion? I get that notion from another observation of De Toqueville's, that in addition to individualists, we are also pragmatists. We look at facts if something doesn't work, we set ideology aside, and say, "Hey something's got to be done." To be sure, we often make it only by the skin of our teeth. But there is that pragmatic point when we finally say "I don't want this, but I guess I have to." I'm saying I think I see that happening in relation to families. For example, look at what happended to Alex Haley's "Roots." All of a sudden, "Roots" became an all-American institution.

But there has been a second even more widespread process occurring, and it's happening here right now. Look at what has brought you together. I have a keen sense of this because, for the past two decades, I went around trying to get people interested in learning about the family. And it was tough work, entertaining fellow though I am. In recent years, the problem is reversed -- everyone wants to hear about the family. What has happened? In my judgment it's quite simple. We are pragmatists. We see that something isn't working and are prepared to do something about it.

What can we do? The line of argument I have been developing suggests that the systems that work best dramatically for human development are the informal ones. In a "formal" system you have to be professional. You can't be irrational. But meeting the needs of children requires an irrational commitment. You've got to say "This is my kid, and he's the greatest kid," even when he isn't the greatest kid. But it's absolutely essential for the development of the kid. You the father, the mother, have got to believe that this kid is the greatest kid. You can't do that if your relationship is professional. You have to have informal systems. There is one around invented some time ago -- it's called the family and it's informal and irrational and does all this very well.

But it isn't enough. You have to have informal systems to support that informal system. Those are called neighborhoods, social networks, connections, songs you sing together. I'm saying they're very important for kids to learn to read. I submit to you that we, being pragmatists, are discovering the cash value of the irrational and it's bringing us together in meetings like this and it's getting us interested in these questions. Remember the statistics are still where I said they were. But I'm so impressed by this business, I'm so impressed by the fact that our parents in Syracuse are saying, "Hey, what makes it all worthwhile is my child." I think our pragmatism is finally turning us around - by the skin of our teeth! Notice what happens, the deficit model gets redefined. You don't fall in love with a deficit.

In the same vein, you accept your neighbors because you live next door to them. You find ways to honor them, and they find ways to honor you. When you're sick they bring over that dish that you can't stomach, but somehow it's much better to have them bring it than not. And then you know it's all right to get sick, because if worse comes to worst, they'll come around.

Well, I can't give any stronger evidence for my predictions, because there isn't any that I know of. I changed my talk because it seemed to me I could no longer assert as I have been saying for the past dozen years: things have to get worse before they can get better. My message for this evening is that things have gotten worse enough now, so we can feel conscience free to do something about them.

The Effects of Divorce on the Social and Cognitive Development of Children

E. Mavis Hetherington

E. Mavis Hetherington, Ph.D., is James A. Page Professor of Psychology and Chair of the Psychology Department at the University of Virginia. Co-author of Contemporary Readings in Child Psychology, she has written and spoken extensively on the effects of divorce on children. Dr. Hetherington is currently serving as editor of the journal "Child Development."

The topics in this paper are developed in more detail in a paper which Dr. Hetherington co-authored with M. and R. Cox, entitled "Family interaction and the social, emotional and cognitive development of children following divorce." In V. Vaughn and T. Brazelton, The Family: Setting Priorities, New York: Science and Medicine, 1979.

It has been said that the high divorce rate does not represent a crisis per se; that it would be a greater crisis if people who were unhappily married were forced to stay together. However, for most families, divorce is a very painful transition and does represent a crisis in their lives. This is particularly apparent when you look at some of the long-lasting effects on the social and the cognitive development of children. There are many changes that go on in the family system in the period immediately following divorce. Some of these are related to coping with the restructuring of the family, dealing with household tasks, dealing with economic problems, the formation of new intimate relationships, and coping with loss in separation. It is not surprising that some of the stresses are reflected in disruptions in parent-child functions. It has been very fasionable in psychology to attribute any of the problems that are encountered in single-parent families (and I am going to talk about single-parent, mother-headed families) simply to father absence and there is a very large literature in psychology, of literally hundreds of studies that are called "The Father Absence Studies." With this label, they are already reflecting a bias in the way they interpret what is going on in single-parent families. It has been based on our theoretical notions, largely those coming from psycho-analytic theory and learning theory, that children need a father figure in the home, and particularly little boys need a father with whom to identify if they're going to develop normally. I am going to propose in the discussion today that, although absence of the father is an important factor, perhaps we can explain more of the differences between the development of children in the single-parent and in the nuclear family if we look at the functioning of the mother who is in the home than if we consider it just in terms of father absence. So, I am going to be talking about differences in the way families function in single-parent families and in nuclear families.

There are a number of ways that fathers in nuclear families support mothers in their child-rearing function. Some of these are through economic support, some are through giving them time out from the ordeal of raising children. One of the mothers in one of my single-parent families very cogently said, "There's no time out in the parenting game in single-parent families," which I think is a very nice description of the task overload, the feeling of being locked into a child's world that we find in many of these single-parent families. Fathers play another role. It has been shown in nuclear families that if the father is supportive of the mother in her maternal role, encouraging and enjoying the mother in this role, the mother is a better parent, the mother is able to function better. Obviously the father also plays the roles that impact more directly on the child. When there are two parents in a family, the child has a wider array of attributes in the parents to model. I think that when you have a male and female adult model, you tend to get more diversity in the kinds of characteristics offered, than when you have two females in a home. In fact, there is fairly good data now, by Frank Pederson, that shows it is not simply that in single-parent families we have one less adult. Pederson did a study where he compared single-parent families in which there are two adults, a grand-parent or a sister or somebody else who is participating in the caretaking, to those in which a father is present. He finds that the interaction with the father is qualitatively different and it impacts a different way on the mothering done by the mother and on the development of the child. So Pederson says there is something special about fathers, and fathers do interact with children in a different way than mothers do. We have the fact that fathers interact differently; they offer a different kind of model than the mother does.

We also find that fathers have more control over children. We will see that control is very basic. In the nuclear family, mothers give twice as many commands as the fathers do. They are much less likely to be obeyed than the father. This is probably why they give twice as many commands. One of the things that mothers in single-parent families have to deal with is the fact that children are more likely to obey a male than a female, and in order to cope with this less authoritative image that women have in our culture, a mother may have to be sort of a super-mother in order to have really good control over her children.

I am going to talk today about three things: 1) the role of conflict in nuclear families and in single-parent families; 2) a concept which I call "parental buffering" (this is the notion that one parent can protect against the pathogenic effects of another, so that if you have one parent who is deviant, who is an inept parent, or who is pathological, if the other parent is very good, they can to some extent mitigate the effects of the pathogenic parent); and 3) that different family processes mediate the cognitive and social development of children in single-parent and in nuclear families. I am going to discuss a longitudinal study of divorce that I did with two colleagues, Marth and Roger Cox. In this study, we studied a divorced mother, the divorced father who did not have custody of the child, and a four year old child at two months, one year and two years after divorce. These were all mother custody cases. Our target child was a preschool child; these were white, middle-class families. The results I'm discussing I don't think would necessarily hold for older children, and for lower-class families. These were with fairly well-to-do, well-educated families.

This study is a massive study, and it differs from the ones discussed before by involving very molecular analysis of behavior. I don't want to spend too much time talking about methodology, but I want to spend some time, because what I am going to be talking about are not clinical judgements; they are accounts of behaviors and interaction sessions.

Let me just describe our methods. At all three points in time in the two years following divorce, we have interviews of the mother and the father. We have observations of the mother and child in the home, and the father and child in his home on visitation days. We have observations of mother and child, father and child in structured and unstructured interactions in the laboratory. We have personality measures on the parents. We have behavior checklists checked by the parent on the children's behavior. It is very hard to observe things like fire setting, stealing, bed wetting, and other low, base rate behavior. You need parents to keep frequency check lists for you. We have diary records kept by the parent, where they have a check grid of what they were doing, who they were with, and where they were, with five mood rating scales, and they rated these every half hour for three days. This was very useful, because you could do a sequence analysis, and you could see things like casual sexual encounters that were followed by a high degree of depression in women, or suicide attempts in women and then chart how long the depression lasts; what is the difference in intensity of depression and anger when mothers are quarrelling with sons versus daughters, and how much longer it lasts when she has a fight with a son. So it was a very useful method to us.

In the observational methods, we had raters essentially coding a stream of behavior in standardized behavior categories; if you know Jerry Patterson's categories, it is fairly similar to those, but included more pro-social behavior. Every five seconds you code interactions; what the child is doing, what the person with the child is doing. This allows you to do very fine-grained sequential analyses. So you can say when mother gives a hostile command, what the child does. You code over time, how long it takes the child to comply or not comply with the hostile command. Live coding takes just as long as a session, but our laboratory coding we videotaped. When you stop-frame coding, you are lucky if it takes eighteen hours to code one hour of observation. If you are not so lucky, it takes twenty-eight hours or more to code. Your reliability has to be extremely high, because when you are interested in doing sequential analysis, one of the things you are concerned about is not the reliability of total categories, like the total number of negative commands mother gives, but you have to look at the reliability of interactions, so you have to look at the reliability of a negative command followed by a comply, let's say, and that's much harder to get than a total. I am just pointing out that this was a very complex study to do, and we are still analyzing it. My students like to tell me that when Freud wrote "analysis terminable or interminable," he was anticipating this study.

We also have observations of the child in the nursery school, observations of the child interacting with peers and in fantasy play. We have cognitive measures, we have the Embedded Figures Test, and the MMF, and we also have sexual typing and social adjustment measures. So we have many measures.

Let's start out and address the question that is often asked and that is: Do children adjust better in single-parent families than in conflict-ridden nuclear families? It's a question that comes up all the time. It's another form of "Should we stay together for the sake of the kids even though we fight all the time?"

What we find is that during the first year of divorce, the children in the divorced families have many more behavior problems than the children in the high-conflict nuclear families. However, by two years after divorce, the children in divorced families have fewer behavior problems than the children in the high-conflict nuclear families. They are starting to adjust to this transitional period. But they still have more than those in low-conflict nuclear families. The first finding, when we view the children over time, is the divorced kids look worse off for the first year, but gradually they do start coping and adjusting and they look better off than the children who are in conflict-ridden nuclear families. The other thing that is quite clear is that boys are much more disturbed than girls are, both by divorce and by conflict in nuclear families. Michael Rutter in England has the same kind of data. Boys are much more disrupted by marital disharmony and by separation and loss than girls are. At two years after divorce, girls in our divorced families were functioning almost as well as the girls in the nuclear families. But our boys still had more behavior problems than the boys in nuclear families.

But are we asking the right question? The question is traditionally phrased in terms of a comparison of single-parent families versus conflict-ridden families. However, conflict does not stop after divorce. Wallerstein and Kelley have very ably documented that conflict frequently accelerates following divorce and that one parent is very often trying to get the children to form hostile alliances against the other parent, and children are going through a great deal of stress in the continuing discord after divorce. So we did another kind of analysis. We took high-conflict and low-conflict divorce families and compared them to high-conflict and low-conflict nuclear families. There you find that the high-conflict divorce families have the most disturbed child of all.

Now, why should this be the case? This leads me to the notion of parental buffering. What you find in a nuclear family where there is high conflict is that, if there is one parent who is loving, involved, protective with the child, that child to some extent avoids some of the effects of the family conflict. In the single-parent family, only the mother can serve as a protective buffer. The absent father, the non-custodial father cannot buffer that child. This is true also when we don't just look at family conflict, but when we look at things like pathology in the mother, when we look at poor parenting in the mother, when we look at rejection by the mother. A good divorced father cannot buffer those effects. So the pathology of the mother funnels directly onto the child in the single-parent family. Now the mother can buffer the effects of a poor father in the divorced family, but only the mother can serve as a protective buffer in the divorced family. Whereas in nuclear families, either the mother or the father can buffer the effects of pathology, poor parenting or rejection, in the other parent. These were all mother custody cases. I think the notion of family buffering is really critical, and we see it in nuclear families all the time. So you can do configurational analyses of families, and Rutter does this with families where you have both parents rejecting, one parent rejecting, one parent criminal and the other not criminal and so on. You see a buffering effect come out quite clearly. We do not get this in single-parent families.

Let me move on and talk about the fact that, over time, mothers become much more salient in shaping their children's behavior in the single-parent family than fathers do. Let me start out and talk about cognitive development in children in single-parent families.

Studies of children raised in mother-headed, single-parent families show two kinds of effects on cognitive development. The first is that these children tend to score lower on standardized achievement tests, and on I.Q. tests. Secondly, there is a particular pattern of abilities that emerges in some studies. This pattern of abilities is one where you get higher verbal than quantitative scores in these kids. High verbal relative to quantitative scores is a feminine pattern of cognitive abilities. So you get two things, an overall depression of scores on standardized tests and grades in school, and a configuration of abilities that looks like a feminine configuration with higher verbal than quantitative scores occurring. You also find that in the few studies which involve longitudinal data on kids from single-parent families, these effects are not there in the early years, but they gradually emerge over the elementary school years. They start coming out late in the elementary school years.

We really had not expected to get differences in cognitive functioning in our kids in the divorced families and in the nuclear families, since most of our children were just entering first grade when the study ended. But we had expected to get differences in what kinds of parental variables contributed to performing well or poorly. Much to our surprise, when we looked at our scores on the W.P.P.S.I. and the Matching Familiar Figures Test, which measures impulsivity and reflectivity, we found that in the first year there is no difference in the cognitive performance of the kids in divorced and nuclear families, but by the end of the second year, we found a drop in the performance I.Q. of the kids of the divorced families and you found that these kids scored with shorter latencies and more errors on the Matching Familiar Figures Test, which is a measure of impulsivity. If you look at the particular scales on the W.P.P.S.I., their scores are dropping on the W.P.P.S.I. on block design, on mazes and on arithmetic. Keep that in mind; I'm going to come back to that.

Now, I am going to talk about what the theories are for differences in cognitive functioning, and what I think is going on, and why we get these drops. The first theory that is offered is an identification theory. You identify with your parents, not only in terms of personality characteristics, and in other forms of sex role typing, but you identify in terms of patterns of cognitive skills, so when the father is not there, you identify with the mother's pattern of cognitive skills, which is probably going to be a high verbal, low quantitative one. The second theory that is offered for these is the tension interference hypothesis. The clinicians in the audiance know that a very standard thing to do to measure stress and psychological disruption in functioning is to see whether vocabulary scores hold, because they are not disrupted usually by stress, and whether reasoning declines, which is often disrupted. So they would say divorce is a stress, living in a single-parent family is a stress, and what you are getting then is an interference effect caused by tensions, that is causing problem solving (in this case, mathematical solving) to decline while verbal scores hold. Another theory that has been offered for overall decline is based on Bob Zajone's notion. His theory explains the differences in intellectual ability of people in different birth orders, in relation to the mean cognitive level of the home. So he thinks of it in terms of birth order, but he has extended it to single-parent families, and says when a first-born child comes into the home, the child has two parents and himself. That's pretty high cognitive level: two adults and a kid. When the second-born child comes in, the overall mean cognitive level is starting to go down: two kids and two adults, and when the sixth-born child comes in, then all is lost, right? What happens in a single-parent family? You have one adult and one child. So the overall mean level is lower. Now in our study, because we had longitudinal data, we looked at changes over time in a number of ways. We tried using cross-lag correlations and we tried using structural equations, which were really a fancy form of imposing a model and saying this is what I think is happening across time, of what things should correlate. These parent variables should correlate with these child variables at these points in time.

Now what did we find? We had a very interesting progression occur in these kids. We found homes in which the mother lost control of the child, in which discipline was inconsistent, in which family disorganization was high, in which household routines broke down, in which roles broke down, in which assignment of responsibility broke down. If you had this two months after divorce, this predicted high distractibility and short attention span in the child in the school and in the home. This was measured by things like how long the child persisted in playing at a task, how long he looked at the teacher when she was reading a story, or if he would get up and walk around if she was reading a story. This in turn, predicted the drop in problem-solving skills in those scales, which require sustained attention, such as mazes block design, and arithmetic. In families in which the mother had good control over the children, in families in which household routines were structured and carried through in a fairly systematic way, you did not get these cognitive drops in the children. I think children under stress, particularly, have such difficulty exerting internal control that they need external controls imposed on them. They need a more ordered world under stress than under non-stress. I think when you don't have this kind of ordered world, the child's attention span decreases, he becomes distractable, he becomes unable to focus on information long enough to process it effectively and then it becomes reflected in deteriorating problem-solving skills.

This kind of sequence did not occur in the nuclear families. This kind of sequence in terms of what processes are involved in terms of problem-solving doesn't occur and I think it's under high stress that you need more control for these kids.

Let's look at two of the areas in social development where probably the most research has been done in single-parent families, and those are the areas of sex typing and self control. The findings in sex typing, and there are a multitude of studies on sex role development of children in single-parent families, are that boys in single-parent families, if they are separated from their fathers before the age of five, may show disruptions in sex typing in the preschool and elementary school years. They show more feminine play patterns, they are more likely to show a pattern of more verbal than physical agression, which is a female pattern and they are more dependent. In toy preferences and occupational preferences, they're more feminine, and they tend to draw the female first when they draw a person. If they lose their father after the age of five, there are not disruptions in sex typing in boys. For girls, disruptions in sex typing are not found to be associated with absence of a father. However when girls get to adolescence, it's associated with disruptions in heterosexual relations. In our study we had a number of measures of sex typing, tests of sex preference in terms of toys, preferred occupations. We had observed behavior in the nursery school. We had teacher ratings of sex typing and adoption of various kinds of behavior. What did we find? As was expected, over the two year period, the boys became more feminine in their sex role preferences, and play patterns. In their draw-a-person tests, they increased in the number of them that drew the female first and there was less sexual elaboration in their drawing. For the little girls there was no disruption in sex role typing, which was expected.

Now what mediates these things? One of the things I'm interested in is the fact that I think that different family processes mediate the child's development in nuclear families and single-parent families. What we found in the cognitive development was the tremendous importance of maternal control. This was not important in the nuclear families, but it was in the single-parent families. What's going to happen in sex role typing? In our nuclear families we found the pattern that occurs over and over: Fathers are the parent who determines the sex role typing of children. This is partly because fathers treat boys and girls differently and fathers are more concerned about boys and girls conforming to sex appropriate behaviors than mothers are. In almost all the studies you see on sex role development in nuclear families, you find that fathers are the most influential in sex typing, and that mothers don't really have much effect. Masculinity in fathers correlates with femininity in daughters but femininity in mothers doesn't correlate to femininity in daughters. Father's reinforcement of little girls for sex typed behavior correlates with femininity in daughters. But mother's reinforcement of little girls for sex typing does not correlate to femininity in daughters. Feminine girls in nuclear families come from fathers who like women, who like their wife, who relate and interact a lot with their daughters, who are masculine themselves and who reinforce the daughter for feminine behaviors. In fact, even when you look later in life, orgasmic satisfaction in women correlates with the relationship with the father, not the relationship with the mother. Some of you probably remember when Fisher's book "The Female Orgasm" was reviewed in Contemporary Psychology, the title of the review was "My Orgasm Belongs to Daddy." The only characteristic in nuclear families that consistently comes out is that warmth in mothers is correlated with femininity in daughters. Nurturant, warm mothers are associated with femininity in daughters. For boys, mothers have a minor effect on the development of masculinity. Again, boys who are masculine have fathers who are dominant, who participate actively in the decision-making process and who are involved both in a warm relationship, but also in a disciplining relationship with the son. If you have a Thurber woman married to a real Casper Milquetoast, then you have got real problems in sex role typing in the boys.

If the father is so critical in sex role typing, what is going to happen in single-parent families? As a matter of fact, that's how I got into working with single-parent families 15 years ago. I was working in sex role typing in nuclear families, and a lot of my research showed that the father is the critical figure in sex role typing for boys and girls. So I asked the question: "What is going to happen in a single-parent family?", and that's how I did my first study on single-parent families 15 years ago. What happens is that, if you look at the single-parent families, at two months after divorce, the father is still the most influential one in terms of what the child's sex role typing is like. But over time, if you just do correlation matrices with mother and child behavior and father and child behavior, you see the mothers getting darker with significant asterisks over time, and the asterisks going out of the father's grid. By the time you get up to two years after divorce, the only father variable that is important is availability of the father; availability still hangs in there. So that fathers who are seeing their kids regularly have more masculine sons. We also found masculine sons in one parent families where we find mothers reinforcing boys' masculine behavior, mothers having a positive attitude toward males and the father, and mothers permitting boys to explore and encouraging boys in rough-and-tumble activities. Where do you find your very feminine boys appearing? I'm going to offer two things that I think are mediating the increase in femininity in boys in these families. Many mothers in single-parent families are extremely over-protective with their boys. They are very distressed when their boy climbs a tree, or when he goes out and gets too grubby. They are very distressed when he goes away from home and they don't know where he is. This king of inhibition of exploratory behavior, of independence and risk-taking behavior, plays an important role. Another thing that plays an important role is when the mother doesn't run down the father. When the mother still approves of the father as an appropriate role model, you have more masculine boys.

A very interesting thing is going on in school. Boys in the school system have a very noxious pattern in the first year after divorce of high aggression and high dependency. They are ineffectual bullies. They will go out and try to grab another kid's teddy bear and when they don't get it they will cry and go get the teacher. Nobody loves an ineffectual bully. Preschoolers like an effectual bully, but nobody loves an ineffectual bully. And these kids are ineffectual bullies. Gradually their peer group is getting more and more put off with them and is avoiding them, shutting them out. By two years after divorce, the behavior of these boys is improving. They are not abnormally physically agressive any more; they are more independent and not whining as much. But the male peer group will not let them in now. They have shut these kids out, so who do these kids have to play with? They have girls and they have younger peers. So why are they getting more feminine patterns of behavior and interests? Partly, it is because these boys are being overprotected by highly anxious mothers at home who do not permit typical masculine activities, and that is discouraging them from identifying with their father. I think at school they are being forced out of their male peer group which is the other place where they can identify and acquire male skills. I think the effect has tremendous impact on boys and one of the things that comes up over and over in our study is the mothers, the teachers, and the peers are less accepting of noxious behavior in boys than in girls. Girls all the way through the divorce process get more support from the mother, they get more support from teachers and more support from peers than the boys do. I think this is one of the main reasons why you get more severe and long lasting effects in boys. Again, with sex role typing we find that different parental behaviors are mediating the development of sex typing boys in single-parent and nuclear families.

One of the other areas in which there is a lot of evidence on kids from single-parent families not functioning as well is in the area of self-control. In studies of the ability to delay gratification, in cheating studies, studies that measure impulsivity, you find that children from single-parent families perform with less control than children in nuclear families.

Now what is contributing to that? We found in our study that one of the things that was happening in the single-parent family was a breakdown in control by both parents. The mother issued twice as many commands as mothers in nuclear families and was less likely to follow through, she was more aversive, less positive and less consistent, particularly in her relationship with boys. The father on the other hand starts out with what we call the "everyday is Christmas" approach to his kids, where he has a different kind of lack of control. He ignores bad behavior. He does not try to assert his authority over the child, then after a day's visit he dumps his kid on the mother's doorstep. Now over time, both mothers and fathers improve in their parenting very dramatically especially in that second year. But what has happened to our boys, particularly, is that mothers and sons get involved in a coercive cycle. At two months after divorce, you are already getting poor parenting, inconsistent discipline, and lack of control on the part of mothers. On the part of children, they are showing the mother little affection, whining, clinging, demanding, physically and verbally abusive, and they show little verbal affection for the mother. The mother is really having a hard time of it. In fact, our mothers used some wonderful phrases, they talked about it being: "a battle for survival" or like "the old Chinese water torture," or the one I like best was that it was "like getting bitten to death by ducks," to describe the constant demands and coerciveness of the kids. What happens is that you get a coercive cycle building, where at the beginning, because parents and children are stressed, the mother's parenting has deteriorated and the kid is in a good deal of emotional need. Boys tend to act out when under stress and you get the cycle started. Then what happens is that the degree of coercive behavior in the child at two months will predict the mothers low self-esteem, feelings of helplessness, depression, and feelings of being externally controlled (at one year after divorce). She says, "Boy, am I a loser. My marriage broke up. I feel unattractive. I feel helpless. Awful things happen to me, and I can't even control my own kid. Look at what a mess my own kid is." As she feels this way, this causes her parenting to deteriorate even further, and the kids' noxious behavior accelerates, which feeds into low self-esteem, which increases her terrible parenting. You have a destructive coercive cycle that is building up in these parents. This was very marked with our boys and mothers in single-parent families.

In our study you could not tell who was going to go into therapy, and it was not our most disturbed families who necessarily went into therapy. More people went into therapy because they had a friend who had gone into therapy and thought it was useful. In our study, you could not tell after they got out of therapy if they had been in therapy, with the exception of one sub-group in our sample who went into behavior-modification-oriented parenting therapy with a 24-hour hot line. This group of mothers who had this kind of support could get very fast feedback that made them feel competent. If you want quick and dirty results, use behavior modification. I don't know how long the effects will last, but you can get changes you can see very rapidly. In the first week you can see changes in the kids' behavior if you have a good behavior modification program going on. The mothers would see their increased control over their children, and on standardized tests, things like feeling more internally controlled, state anxiety, depression, these would go down. These women felt competent. They said, "Hey, I can control my life; I'm not so helpless; I'm not such a loser. I've got that youngster going to bed when I tell him, instead of staying up and banging his head against the bed till midnight. He's in bed, and I did it." I think that's very important. Now it may be that after you get this kind of demonstration of confidence in the mothers in feelings of being able to control their destiny, then more dynamically-oriented focusing on some of their problems would work. But when a problem like a coercive cycle builds up like this, it is so overwhelming that it just swamps everything else. The day-to-day living with a noxious acting out kid is so difficult, it swamps everything else. I think it's very difficult to cope with other forms of self actualization until you cope with this problem that is there 24 hours a day destroying you. This was very important in the development of self-control. Maternal control, maternal consistency in discipline were very critical in terms of self-control in boys. But by two years after divorce, the only thing that is hanging in with the father is again paternal availability.

I'm going to stop here, but I want to offer a couple of precautionary notes. I've been talking as though the parents shape the children. Probably, from what I've been saying about the coercive cycle, the children shape the parents, and I am a family systems person, so I don't think of uni-directional effects in families. I just have to over-simplify it when I only have an hour to present such complex results, but it is quite obvious that parents and children are shaping each other. I would also like to say that I don't think the family system ends at divorce. I think the family system is reorganized and I think family functioning changes, but the restructured family continues. I would also like to say that we found the best support system for mothers and children was to have a continuing relationship with the father. Only when you have a father who is really deviant - abusive, alchoholic, destructive in the relationship with the child - or when the conflict was so high that the parents continued to pull and haul at the kid, only under these circumstances was contact with the father disruptive.

In general, contact with the father had very positive effects for both mother and child. I think that in any approaches we take to treating these families, we should try to keep the non-custodial parent involved as much as he wishes to be. It is critical not to shut out the non-custodial parent. Thank you.

Growing Up a Little Faster: The Experience of Children in a Single-Parent Household

Robert S. Weiss

Robert S. Weiss, Ph.D., is Professor of Sociology at the Univeristy of Massachusetts, Boston. He also holds an appointment as Lecturer in Sociology in the Department of Psychiatry at the Harvard Medical School. Dr. Weiss is the author of Marital Separation; much of his recent writing has been on the topics of divorce, custody, and single parents.

A recent review of research on the impact on children of parental divorce points out that attention has been given primarily to the consequences for children of the absence from their homes of their fathers. (Longfellow, 1979) Generally father-absence has been thought to be important because it implies the absence of the parent who carried major responsibility for discipline and who provided a model of masculine role-behavior. (Biller, 1974) Work has also been done on the consequences for children -- unhappy in at least the short run -- of the loss from their homes of one of their parents. (Bowlby, 1973) The effects on children of changes in their relationships with their custodial parents have received relatively little attention, although they have been commented on by some investigators working in a psychiatric tradition. (Wallerstein and Kelly, 1974; Klebanow, 1976) Still less attention has been given to the effects on children of their changed responsibilities in their new households and of their being required to participate in households that are now differently organized. Gardner, a child psychiatrist, does note that "When parents separate, the children are generally required to assume new responsibilities and obligations." (1976, page 169) And George and Wilding (1972) in a discussion of motherless households say:

> The mother's absence inevitably resulted in the children having to take on more responsibility in looking after themselves and helping the father to run the house....

But these writers are exceptional in that they recognize that changes occur in a child's life as a result of there being only one parent in the child's household. And they give these changes little more than passing attention.

This paper is concerned with the changed organization of single-parent households and the consequences for children's lives and for their development of these changes. Some aspects of the phenomena with which this paper deals are entirely evident to single parents themselves. They quite regularly note that their children have been required to assume responsibilities greater than the children would have, had the children been within a two-parent family throughout their childhood. They sometimes say, about their children, "They have had to grow up a little bit faster." Less evident to the single parent may be the changed nature of the parent's relationship to the children. Yet this is an almost necessary implication of the children's increased responsibility.

This paper is based on data collected in a series of studies conducted within the research program of The Laboratory of Community Psychiatry, Harvard Medical School. In the course of these studies, well over two hundred single parents have been interviewed, many of them several times over intervals of six months to a year.[1] For comparison purposes, extensive interviews have also been held with a small number of married couples. In addition, individual interviews have been held with children in about twenty families, the children ranging in age from six to young adult, and group interviews have been held with another twenty or more adolescent children.

The single parent family and the absence of an echelon structure

In most well-functioning two-parent households, there is not much opportunity for children to enter into household decision-making. Young children and even adolescents generally have little influence on familial matters. The children can decide on the decorating scheme for their rooms, select their own clothes, choose their friends and their hobbies. But household issues, such as when mealtimes are scheduled and which household jobs are assigned to the children, and familial issues, such as where the family will go on the parents' vacation, tend to be decided by the parents, perhaps after limited consultation with the children. The maintenance and direction of the family unit is a parental responsibility.

Because the parents are jointly responsible, each parent feels pledged to support the other. Should there be no prior agreement on a particular issue, each parent is expected to respect any position assumed by the other, at least while the parents are in the presence of the children. In reality, one parent may countermand the other's directives or may collude with the children to frustrate the other's wishes, but behavior of this sort is understood as irresponsible and, perhaps, hostile in intent. In a well-functioning two-parent household, each parent can count on the other to support that parent's rulings.

Erving Goffman (1961) has given the name "echelon structure" to an authority structure in which a partnership agreement, not necessarily explicit, exists among those on a superordinate level which has the effect of giving anyone on that level authority in relation to anyone on a subordinate level. The army maintains this sort of authority structure; so do hospitals; so do two-parent families. One-parent families do not. The parent in the one-parent family need not check with the second parent before acceding to the children's wishes in an area in which the second parent is known to have strong commitments; the parent need not avoid alliances with the children which might prove embarrassing should it become necessary to back up the second parent; no longer is there a structure in which the parent is unable to make common cause with the children for fear of betraying a prior understanding with the other parent. Without a second parent in the household, the echelon structure of the two-parent family collapses.

Although the collapse of the echelon structure does not require that a parent's relationship to the children undergo change, it makes change possible. In particular, it makes possible the development of a new relationship in which the children are defined as having responsibilities and rights in the household not very different from the parent's own. Children now can be asked not only to perform additional chores -- this would have been possible within an echelon structure as well -- but also to help in the making of decisions for the household and for themselves. Now the parent can decide things with the children; and, often, the parent will.

If a single parent is working full-time, and, especially, if the parent has more than one child to care for, then the parent is likely to find that sharing responsibility with the children is very nearly necessary to maintain the functioning of the household. Some single parents report having called their children into a family council at which they announced to the children that now, with only one parent in the household, the family would have to be run in a new way, with every member of the family assuming a full share of responsibility. They would no longer assume the roles of respondents to their children's expressions of need. Instead they would be responsible for a certain set of household tasks -- they would be wage-earners and would handle finances and would be responsible for keeping it all going -- but their children would have to be responsible for other sets of household tasks. They were moving from a role complementary to that of the children -- mother or father to the children -- to a role parallel to that of the children: fellow member of the household. The following is from an interview with a mother of four children who ranged in age from about ten or eleven to about sixteen:

> As soon as I was on my own, I sat down with the children -- I always had a good rapport with the children -- and I told them, "Now things are different. Instead of, more or less, it being a family of mother and four children, we're all one family with all equal responsibility, and we all have a say, and we're all very important. And if it is going to work right, we all have to be able to cooperate with each other."

In this new definition of the household structure, the children are expected to do their share, just as is the parent. Children, though they may not at first be as reliable as they later become, eventually prove equal to this expectation. Children of only three are able to keep their toys in order; children of four or five can make their own beds, although they may complain that the beds will only have to be unmade in the evening; eight-year-olds can vacuum floors and clean up a kitchen; ten-year-olds can cook; adolescents are capable of looking after themselves and younger children through much of a weekend. A man with three daughters aged four to nine described how they helped during their breakfast rush:

> It is a matter of survival. Each of the kids has a chore. Patsy makes her bed in the morning when she gets up. That is one less job that I have to do. Shirley gets the cereal down if we are having cereal. Lenore clears the table and puts the dishes in the dishwasher. While one is in the bathroom the other has something to do. By the time we leave the house in the morning, the beds are made, the table is cleared, and the dishes are put away in the dishwasher.

But the single-parent household is different from the two-parent household not only in that children are likely to be asked to do more. It is different also in that children are held responsible, not only for chores themselves, but for the continued functioning of the household. They are asked to accept that the functioning of the household is as much dependent on their contributions as on the contributions of the parent. They are asked, in a way, to assume some of the concerns of management: to move from the role of low-ranking member of the household to that of junior partner.

The difference between the child's role in the one-parent and the two-parent household is made manifest when the child fails to perform an expected task. In the two-parent household, the parents may decide that the chore is beyond the child's capacity, or that getting the child to help is more trouble than it is worth, or that the child requires discipline or a lecture on household citizenship. In any event a decision will be made on the parental level regarding how the issue is to be handled. In the one-parent household the child will be directly confronted by the parent, not with a considered decision, but with the parent's anger or dismay: for the child is failing to meet a partnership responsibility. One mother insisted that her children inspect her work-roughened hands so that they would realize that she was doing her part. Several single parents reported exploding, "I can't do it all myself. I must have your help!" In the two-parent family a chore undone may mean more work for the parents; in the one-parent family it means this and more: it represents a threat to the partnership understandings the parent has attempted to establish with the children.

The definition of the children as junior partners in the management of the household permits the children new rights and authority as well as requiring of them new responsibilities. In the absence of an adult partner, it becomes feasible for the single parent to make familial decisions jointly with the children. Given that the children are affected by the decisions and will be expected to cooperate in their realization, to consult them seems only sensible; indeed, only those single parents determined to retain their previous authority in their households seem to behave differently; most find it natural to bring the children into decision-making for the household. One woman, mother of two girls aged seven and five, said:

> We all make decisions together as far as making plans on where we're going, what we're going to eat, or, if they go with me to the store, they help make decisions as far as things that I buy for the house. They make decisions on their own clothes, of course.

One way in which a single parent may share managerial responsibility with a child is by making the child responsible for younger children in the family. This delegation of parental responsibility may happen even though the older child is still quite young.

> Shirley was only seven when her father died. I went back to work right away. Then she was only nine when I first had to leave Glenn with her a couple of times on a Saturday, as much as I didn't want to.

Another way in which a single parent may share managerial responsibility is by asking a child of the other sex to assume responsibilities that might, in a marriage, have been assumed by the spouse. Thus, a single father may rely on an elder daughter to act as hostess and housekeeper as well as to keep an eye on the other children, and a single mother may rely on an elder son to do the heavy work around the house. One mother said:

> I expect my seventeen-year-old son to understand that even if his friends don't explain to the plumber what happened, that in his particular situation he should do it, because a plumber will pay more attention to another male.

Indeed, it is possible for single parents to become quite dependent on their children's contributions to the functioning of their households. The departure from the household of a child may mean the loss of a supportive household member as much as it means the ending of caretaking responsibility for the child. Another mother said:

> Bill was really the man of the house around here for years. Any kind of physical labor that I couldn't do, he would always just do it for me. When he went into the Service I missed him more than I had missed my husband.

Parents are sometimes brought up short when others remark on the shift that has taken place in their relationships with one or more of the children. One woman found it entirely natural to consult her six-year-old son, her only child, about when they would have supper, until a friend remarked that few other six-year-olds were treated by their parents as though they were peers. Occasionally parents are forced by a sudden sense of incongruity to recognize the shift themselves. One woman described wondering, on being criticized by her fifteen-year-old son for being late with dinner, whether she had encouraged her son to assume the prerogatives of man of the house.

Single parents sometimes report that one of their children competes with them for the leadership role within the family. This child may intrude, challenging the parent's authority, when the parent is talking with one of the other children. Or a child may attempt to play the role of fellow parent in a helpful fashion, just as might the second parent in a two-parent household.

> My oldest son has taken on that role of being a parent, telling the others what they should do and what they shouldn't do and how he will send so-and-so to bed if so-and-so doesn't do this or that. And he'll take on all kinds of responsibilities. And I don't think it's good for him, because he's only eleven.

Parents react in quite different ways to these developments. Some are concerned; others are more complacent. Some assume that it is only to be expected that if there is a vacant parental role one or another of the children will want to fill it. One mother of four children spoke of her eldest son as being piqued because her second son, apparently a more attractive boy, had become the one the youngest two children looked to for direction. Sometimes the issue of the vacant parental role becomes a matter for family discussion. One mother reported that after she and her husband separated, her oldest son said that he was not about to become man of the family for her. (She said she replied, "I just got rid of one. Why should I want another?")

If single parents work or have evening activities that take them out of the home, their children sooner or later are required to assume a good deal of responsibility for themselves in addition to their other familial responsibilities. For intervals of varying lengths of time the children are likely to be required to look after themselves, beginning when the children are quite young. One woman said:

> I leave for work at seven-thirty and my son doesn't leave for school until eight-thirty. Five years ago if you had said, "What do you think about leaving an eight-year-old," I'd have looked at you in horror.

Many parents who work, like the parent above, must leave home before their children leave for school and then use the telephone to keep in touch with their children when the children have returned home. And so children may be required to make their own breakfasts and fix their own lunches, get themselves off to school, and then look after themselves on returning home from school, perhaps at that point remaining within their homes so their parents can be assured that they are staying out of trouble.

Children in a one-parent home may be treated by the parent as friends or confidants. In a single-parent household, there may be no one other than the children for the parent to confide in or to whom to turn for advice or company. In a well-functioning two-parent household, parents bring to each other their tensions and uncertainties; even in a badly functioning two-parent household, the echelon structure of the household encourages parents to discuss central family-related issues with each other and acts as a deterrent to extensive confiding in the children. Thus, there is often greater closeness between the single parent and the children than there was when the parent was married. (See also George and Wilding, 1972, page 73.) One mother said:

> Dealing with another person in your life, your mind is going to that person, it's dwelling on him, so that you are not as close to the kids. I've gotten closer to the kids since the separation.

But if the ending of the echelon structure permits children to define themselves as peers of the parent -- younger peers, but still peers -- the development of companionship between parents and children encourages the children in this definition. Perhaps especially when there is an only child, companionship and mutual affection may replace the more parental elements of nurturance or direction as the dominant motif of the parent-child relationship. The parent's worries, too, may be shared with the children because the children are the only others there in the household, as well as because the children are seen as sharing responsibility for the household.

> You're hit with these bills and who can you talk to about it but the kids? It's the only other people that you can really talk to. You have to have someone to share it with and so you share it with the people that you're doing it for. And, every so often, if they're bugging me for something that costs too much money, that's out of proportion to what I can afford, I take the bills out and show them the bills, show them what we get in monthly and say, "Now you make sense of it."

Parents may go beyond simply being open and companionate with their children. Especially during the troubled months immediately following the ending of their marriages, single parents may rely on their children for comfort, reassurance, and the sort of nurturant caring that might be called parental. One mother of two boys, aged four and six at the time of her divorce, said:

> At the time of my emotional instability I stayed with the kids and I really did draw from them a lot of strength. I'm not sure that was good for them or for me, but that was what I did.

We might, in these instances, characterize the parent-child relationship as in a state of role reversal. Role reversals seem usually to be of brief duration. The inappropriateness of the reversed roles appears to be recognized by both parent and child, and to create discomfort for both. The parent's discomfort may be especially strong should a child assume the role of admonitory adult. The child in the following report was about ten.

> I called my house and Mark said, "When are you coming home?" And I said, "Pretty soon." And he said, "Ma, it's a quarter of eight. Now you had better get home here quick." And I said, "Okay, Mark. I'm just having drinks with a few friends." And he said, "Well, don't drink too much and be home soon." And I said, "All right, give me about an hour." And he said "Are you sure?" And I said, "Yes, about an hour." And I got off the

> phone, and I said, "I did this with my mother when I was a kid! I'd call up and have to give these excuses! And I'm still doing it and I'm twenty-nine years old!"

The Effects on the Child of Changed Household Roles

We see that there are many reasons why children in single-parent households may be encouraged to be more responsible, more independent, and more alert to adult values and concerns than other children of the same age. They are likely to be required to make greater contributions to the functioning of their families than are other children, to be more actively involved in family decision-making, and may be encouraged to develop a relationship with the parent more like that of friend and confidant than like that of a child. These new demands are functional for the parent and for the family unit. What are the effects on the child?

Those observers who have noted the changed roles of children in single-parent families have been cautious in their evalutions of the consequences for the children. Gardner (1976) writes, "Some regress in response to the new demands and others rise to the occasion and attain a new salutary maturity. There are others, however, whose new maturity is spurious." (page 169) And George and Wilding (1972), reporting the assessments of the single fathers they interviewed, say:

> Fathers were divided about the value of ... extra responsibility to the children. Some felt that it made children more independent and they thought it would stand in good stead one day. Others felt that their children suffered as they had less time to play, to do school work or other things they wanted to. (page 73)

Our respondents generally saw the changes produced in their children by growing up in single-parent households as largely beneficial, although they might regret that their children could not be permitted a time of freedom from responsibility. A mother of three children, the oldest not yet in his teens, described in this way the impact on her children of her having been divorced:

> I have not seen any adverse effect. In fact, they have become a little more independent and more mature. Since I started working, they have had to pitch in a bit. Before that, I waited on them hand and foot, and that's not good for any child.

Adolescents who are living within single-parent families tend to agree that they have been required to move toward early maturity in a number of ways. They seem to see the consequences as more nearly mixed. It has meant less security: they say that they have learned to share their parents' worries, perhaps especially their parents' worries about money (Cf., Wallerstein and Kelly, 1974). Several adolescents whose parents were separated or divorced said that they were constantly aware that their parents were financially pressed. Their fathers complained to them of their mothers' financial demands, and their mothers complained of their fathers' unwillingness to help. Or their mothers asked them to tell their fathers that they needed clothes or school books or money for orthodonture, while the fathers told them to tell their mothers to be more reasonable. A few children had shifted their residence from mothers' homes to fathers' homes and had then been made aware of disputes between the parents over whether their fathers remained liable for support payments. One adolescent girl, reviewing her childhood, said:

> You don't have, not necessarily the childhood, but you don't have the freedom of not worrying about things, about money.

Some adolescents report having been made quite insecure by their parents' concern about money. One girl told of checking her downstairs food pantry to reassure herself that it was filled with canned goods.

Awareness of their parents' concerns led adolescents to recognize that their parents were people like themselves, with frailties as well as strengths. They were thus led to "de-idealize" their parents. (Wallerstein and Kelly,

1974) Further impetus to the de-idealization of their parents came from adolescents' observations of the parents' attempts to establish new cross-sex relationships. They learned that their parents could be elated when things went well in the parents' dating life, and depressed when they went badly, just as was true for them. They may also have witnessed their parents' uncertainty in sexual matters, and so have learned to see the parents as beset by some of the same conflicts that troubled them. This more realistic view of their parents would have been strengthened should the parents have turned to them, as fellow members of the parents' households, for understanding and support. But recognizing the parents' frailties reduced the adolescents' ability to rely unquestioningly on them.

Some adolescents said that they had become self-reliant because there seemed no one else on whom they could rely. Here is a comment by a sixteen-year-old girl that expressed this feeling:

> My mother works days, and I have to make sure I get home when I say I will. And I do my share of the housework. Not as much as my mother would like, maybe, but enough. I have become very independent. I am an independent person. I can probably get along by myself if I have to. Not completely. If my mother died, I'd be crying. But I'd get along. I think it's because I already do a lot of things by myself that, I suppose, if I had both parents, I wouldn't have to.

These children sometimes describe themselves as both more competent than other children and as "loners," not isolated, but not deeply enmeshed in the peer culture either. Other children sometimes treat them as unusually sober. One girl spoke of being used as "Dear Abby" by her friends. But most prominent in the self-description of these children is their sense of unusual competence. And in truth, in contrast to other children, these children regularly cook, help clean house, and take care of themselves. Also, they are likely to take pride in being able to carry more responsibility than their friends from two-parent households who, in their view, have been pampered. Here is a comment by a sixteen-year-old girl:

> I get very angry at times, like when I hear this girl, she said, "My mother yelled at me this morning because I didn't make my bed, and I am so upset today." And I just think, "You little twerp! I have to make my bed, my mother's bed, I have to clean the whole house, I have to cook the dinner, I have to take trash out!" And I was just so angry.

These children, on recognizing how much more capable they are, in certain respects, than other children, may feel enhanced esteem for themselves. But they may also feel some envy of children who have had less to deal with. One girl said:

> If there were two parents, it might be better. It would be kind of like when my grandmother comes. You come home and there is Grandmother. You know she's going to be there, you know she's going to have the house cleaned up and the table set. I don't know, just silly little things, that you don't have to come home and worry about it and do it yourself or try to get your sister's help to do it, because Mother isn't there.

Many of these adolescents report a sense of their families as incomplete. One fifteen-year-old girl said that what she missed most was not so much seeing her father -- as it happened, she saw him two or three times a week -- but rather living in a household in which a father and mother were jointly present. She said:

> I don't miss my father so much as I miss the "Daddy, Mommy," business. It's a curious thing, to have, instead of family dinners, just me and my mother. And on Christmas, when you get downstairs, there's just your mother.

It would seem accurate to say that most children of single-parent families, though they may be pleased that they proved able to meet the challenges of new expectations, also regret having had to do so.

Possible long run effects on children of growing up a little faster

What difference does it make in the long run for a child to have "grown up a little faster?" It appears from the work of Bowlby (1973) that the loss of a parent from a household is, for most children, a serious reverse which may for some time affect their development. And, if parents remain in conflict with each other after the ending of their marriages, their children may well be at risk of becoming engaged by that conflict. No matter whether the children identify with one parent, attempt to maintain loyalty to both, or refuse to ally themselves with either, the children may find the parents' quarrel drains the children's energy, leaving the children with too little for their own concerns. These are ways in which parental separation and divorce are very likely to be harmful to children. The changed role of the children in the household, however, appears not in itself to be injurious, at least for children who are adolescent.

Adolescents appear capable of managing both greater responsibility and independence than they are ordinarily permitted. This is not to say that adolescents can forgo parental support and investment, but rather that, so long as there has been no earlier deprivation of nurturance, and so long as some degree of parental support and investment remain available, adolescents can assume additional responsibility for their households and themselves without sustaining harm to their development. They can, without detriment to their development, assume genuine responsibility for contributing to the functioning of their households, function through much of the day without adult supervision or control, act as companions and confidants to their parents, and, on occasion, act as their parents' parents. All these developments, fostered by the new structure of the single-parent family, appear entirely manageable by adolescents. On the other hand, should there be a withdrawal of parental concern, of parental emotional investment in the adolescent's well-being, as an accompaniment to the change in family structure, the adolescent's trust in the reliability of apparently committed others might be diminished, with some risk to the course taken by the adolescent's future life. For in adolescence even more than later in life, individuals decide their own worth in good part on the worth apparently placed on them by significant others. But so long as parents display continued investment in them, adolescents seem able to take in stride the new responsibilities of living in a single-parent family.

It seems to be a different matter with younger children. Children not yet adolescent may be needful of more parental accessibility than is made available by the schedule of most working single parents. This may be particularly the case with those children whose despairing and sometimes depressed parents have turned to them for understanding (thus communicating to the children that the parents are not bulwarks against insecurity), who not only have had to help out at home but also, from an early age, have had to look after themselves through much of the day, perhaps coming straight home from school so that their parents can establish by telephone that they are safely home These are the young children who are likely to become oddly precocious, oddly self-reliant. Sometimes these children seem socially more capable than their age-mates and are looked up to by them; it can be attractive to age-mates who feel less assured to be with someone who appears entirely self-sufficient. But many of these children may encapsulate their need for a parent, prevent the yearning they have for a parent's nurturance from reaching expression. At those infrequent moments when the real parent is present and fully accessible such a child may insist on the parent providing reassurance that further loss will not occur--but, in keeping with the child's learned inability to express needs for nurturance directly, may do so only in a disguised fashion. Then neither the child nor the parent will be able to identify quite what it is that the child really wants. Interchanges between child and parent become frustrating, and degenerate into quarrels whose origins are baffling to both child and parent. Or the child may despair of ever gaining the parent's attention, may learn that the parent is simply incapable of providing the investment the child wants, and then the child may withdraw or act out, or may, in a startling denial of the child's own needs, become a helper to the parent or a substitute for the parent. For, so long as the child behaves in a parental fashion, there is at least one parent figure around: the child.

These younger children may have both special strengths and special vulnerabilities when they become adults. They may have greater ability to work creatively and autonomously than adults whose early lives required less of them. But I wonder whether, when they take the type of job which prizes their unusual ability to function autonomously, they are not vulnerable to dissatisfaction because no matter how well they do, no matter how much recognition they receive, they cannot find in the job rewards that would satisfy their persisting need for the care and investment of a nurturant figure. I would wonder, too, whether they would not have special strengths and vulnerabilities as parents. More than other parents, they might be able to respond to children's needs for nurturance, and so might be unusually solicitous of their children. But might they not also, perhaps without awareness of their feelings, become envious of their children for having more attentive parents than they had themselves? Would they not, then, tend to vacillate in their treatment of their children, being at one point intensely attentive, at another somewhat removed? Might they not, even, find full-time parenting to be exhausting, because of their simultaneous positive and negative feelings, and adopt a parental style in which they are intensely caring, but only occasionally present?

Undoubtedly there are many, many ways in which the experience of growing up in a single-parent family can affect later functioning. The developments suggested would represent only a few of those possible. Yet it does seem to be the case that participation in the single-parent household has different meaning for children, depending on the children's ages. Children not yet adolescent, although able successfully to adapt to new responsibilities and requirements, may do so while harboring strong needs for nurturance and protection. These needs, together with defenses against their expression, seem likely to persist rather than fade, and may be expected to give evidence of themselves in the children's later occupational and familial roles. Adolescents, on the other hand, appear able fully to accept more responsibility for themselves and their families than they are ordinarily required to in two-parent families. Their needs for parental nurturance and investment, though real, seem less to require parental accessibility through much of the time the children are at home. It may be adequate, for them, that they know that the parent cares about them and is available to them should they be unable to manage on their own.

Those whose experience with children who have grown up in single-parent families comes primarily from working with the most distressed, are likely to emphasize the pathogenic potential of these families. But for many children, both younger and older, the new demands on them for autonomy and responsibility may lead to growth as well as, especially for younger children, imposing some stress. For while these youngsters may regret not having a more traditional family and also may regret not having someone at home to care for them, they often respect themselves for having been able to respond to what they recognize as their family's genuine need for their contributions.

The single-parent family, insofar as it requires that the children within it behave responsibly, may, in this respect, be a superior setting for growing up than the two-parent family. In many two-parent families genuine responsibility for the household is withheld from children. The children may be assigned a variety of chores, but the partnership of the parents prevents them from participating as full members of the household. Children in single-parent households often have no option: they must participate in their households as full members, with the rights and responsibilities of full members. And this can be a useful experience. The last word may be given to a seventeen-year-old boy, the youngest of four children, who had been in a single-parent household for five or six years. He said:

> In the long run -- I feel sort of like I shouldn't say it -- but a lot of kids are better off if their parents do get divorced, because you grow up a lot quicker.

FOOTNOTES

1. Other publications based on these materials include: by the author of this paper, MARITAL SEPARATION, (Basic Books, 1975); LONELINESS: THE EXPERIENCE OF EMOTIONAL AND SOCIAL ISOLATION, (MIT Press, 1974); "Helping relationships: relationships of clients with physicians, social workers, priests, and others," SOCIAL PROBLEMS, Vol. 20, No. 3, Winter, 1973, pp. 319-328; and "Couple relationships," in THE COUPLE, edited by Marie Corbin, (New York: Penguin Books, 1978). Also, by Ira O. Glick, Robert S. Weiss, and C. Murray Parkes, THE FIRST YEAR OF BEREAVEMENT, (Wiley-Interscience, 1975). The preface to GOING IT ALONE: THE FAMILY LIFE AND SOCIAL SITUATION OF SINGLE PARENTS, (Basic Books, 1979) describes the various studies.

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Nurturant Fathers and Cooperative Parenting: Post-Divorce Childcare

Harry F. Keshet and Kristine M. Rosenthal

Harry F. Keshet, M.S.W., Ph.D., is Clinical Director of the Divorce Resource and Mediation Center in Cambridge. He served as Research Director of the Fathering Study at Brandeis University. Much of Dr. Keshet's recent writing has focused on the experiences of divorced and separated fathers.

Kristine Rosenthal, Ph.D., is Assistant Professor of Sociology at Brandeis. Her recent publications include (with Harry Keshet) "The Not-Quite-Stepmother," and "Fathering After Marital Separation." She is the recipient of a Rockefeller Foundation grant to study fertility attitudes of divorced men with childcare experience.

The topics in this paper are developed in more detail in the authors' recent book, Fathers Without Partners: A Study of Divorced Men and Their Families, Totowa, N.J.: Rowman and Littlefield, 1980.

Childcare involvement on the part of men is not a new phenomenon. Fathers had traditionally taken an active part in the care and upbringing of their children, especially their male children, before the needs of industry and technology separated home from workplace. Children, considered then a type of property, stayed with the father in the unlikely event of divorce. The combination of the reduced role of the father in the family setting and the increased awareness of the specific developmental stage of childhood with needs for nurturance and dependency have served to bring us to the current situation where the notion of parenting is almost synonymous with care by the mother (Derdeyn, 1976).
In most urban industrial families childcare and family tasks are assigned to women, while the role of the father is primarily that of an economic provider. He is expected to meet most of his family obligations by being a successful and conscientious worker.

Analyses of work and family in modern America have been summarized as accepting the centrality of work for determining the quality of family life (R. Kantor, 1976). Socialization for career performance has been viewed as one of the outstanding features of male identity (Pleck, 1975); as a source of life purpose (Morse and Weiss, 1955); a prized self-image (Wilensky, 1966); and an important validating experience (Rainwater, 1974). In addition, men's direct participation in the rearing of their children has been neither encouraged nor studied, and detrimental effects on children associated with the absence of fathers have been commonly attributed to socio-economic variables (Nye, 1957; Parry and Phul, 1963; Crain and Stamn, 1965). In contrast, maternal care and its effects on the development of children have been widely discussed (Bowlby, 1951). In the context of that discussion, the father's role appears to be one of support to the mother, a good husband is a good father by definition. Benson (1968) in an extensive review of fathering literature finds "widespread expression of the belief that the basic psychosomatic makeup of men provides them with little aptitude for childrearing." The consensus emerges that it is neither appropriate nor necessary for men to engage in childcare. Now a decade or so later, we find ourselves in the midst of redefinition of the fathering role due in part to the rapidly increasing rate of divorce, the changing ideology about sex role stereotypes, the new economic and social autonomy of women, and the pressures within families for more equal participation in all aspects of family life. The interest in the importance of fathers for their children has been awakened (Biller and Meredith, 1974; Lynn, 1974) and with it a new consciousness about the possibility of nurturant roles for males (Levine, 1976; David and Bronnon, 1976; Keshet and Rosenthal, 1978). "Parenting has become a desirable role for many and fathers are accepting major parental responsibilities within the two parent family context and the single parent context" (Warren, 1976).

For many men this new involvement in the fathering role is a direct consequence of marital separation. In most cases the dissolution of marriage leads to a slow but inevitable dissociation of parenting ties. Few men seek the custody of their minor children, and even fewer are granted custody by the courts. In 90% of divorces with minor children the custody is given to the mother (LeMaster, 1971). Although the laws do not explicitly favor either parent, custom, opinion and precedent make the mother a preferred custodial parent, and in most cases the mother must be proven an unfit parent before the father's request for custody will be taken into consideration. Still the numbers of children living with a father after divorced, small as it is, has tripled in the last ten years (U.S. Census, 1974). Joint custody, as well as informal childcare sharing arrangements, are becoming more common among young couples with children. Faced with the likelihood of losing relationships with their children through lack of daily contact, many young fathers on the verge of divorce are opting for some cooperative arrangement with their ex-spouses which would allow them to be active participants in their children's growing years (Keshet, 1975). Because so many of these arrangements are informal, it is difficult to obtain exact count of its occurrence, but the numbers of current publications based on personal experiences of such fathers attest to the growing interest in post-divorce fathering.

Our Sample

The study reported was designed to explore the effects of childcare involvement on the lifestyles of young divorced men. One hundred twenty-seven separated or divorced fathers were interviewed about their childcare responsibilities. Each man had at least one child aged between three and seven. Each had been separated for at least one year prior to the interview. Although the men varied in the amount of contact with their children, from a minimum of one weekend a month to a maximum of full-time care, we will report here mainly about those fathers who either had full custody or shared it with their ex-wives on half time basis. Half time fathers cared for their child for one half a week or alternated weekly care of their children with their former spouse. Twenty-nine of the fathers were in the last category and 49 had full custody. All respondents lived in the Greater Boston Area. They represented a highly educated urban population: close to half the sample had completed, or were about to complete, professional or graduate training. Fathers who shared childcare were most likely professionals. This group can be assumed to have chosen their childcare arrangement, as to conform to their work schedules as opposed to the full time fathers who may not have the same level of flexibility.

Seventeen percent of the total sample did not work full time. With increased childcare time, work hours tended to decrease. Twenty-two percent of full custody fathers and twenty-one percent of joint custody men worked less than full time, compared to only eight percent of visiting fathers. Income also fluctuated with childcare time. Twenty-four percent of full and joint custody fathers compared to nineteen percent of visiting fathers earned less than $8,000. The fact that full time fathers average considerably less income gives us some indication of the effect of childcare on the work lives of actively parenting men. The average age of the fathers was 34 with joint custody fathers being somewhat younger. By and large this group represents an upwardly mobile population and is not likely to be living in close proximity to their own parental families. Thus they lack extended family to rely on for assistance with childcare and are more likely to turn to friends, trained professionals and ex-spouses both for actual help and for advice.

Although at present these men represent a small proportion of divorced fathers, there is a growing trend towards continued involvement with children after divorce. Their lifestyles, problems, and the process of change which they go through as a result of marital separation provides us with important insights into a situation which will be faced by increasing numbers of men. Who are the role models for these newly nurturant males? How does the acceptance of parenting responsibility affect other aspects of their lives? And, finally, how is the father-child bond maintained when the marriage ties are no longer in effect, in other words, how can a man remain a good father when he is no longer a husband?

Marital Separation as a Disruption of the Male Role

The available literature on divorce, post-divorce family, and general adjustment to marital disruption is primarily focused on the problems of mother-headed families and fatherless children (Weiss, 1975). Divorced men are seen as having "regained their freedom," and expected, except for some financial constraints, to lead the life of single men (Hunt, 1967). Yet both physicians and mental health practitioners are well aware of the enormous emotional pain and disruption which accompanies the breakup of a marriage, even when the marriage had long been unsatisfactory and even when a new love partner is already on the scene. It is precisely because the family images of men as lovers, fathers, and heads of families are so totally dependent on their relationships with their spouses, that a breakdown of that relationship leaves many men unsure about their ability to fulfill any of the expected functions. Depression, sadness, anger, loneliness, anxiety and severe and frequent mood changes are characteristic at that time (George and Wilding, 1972). Guilt is most frequent reaction, guilt over failure of the family ties, over the inability to have kept the family intact in spite of whatever problems might have come up (Keshet, 1976). Many husbands' lack of direct involvement with the children makes the men dependent on the very existence of a family unit for their sense of fatherhood. It is the wife's and children's being there, waiting with supper, needing the bills paid that creates an image of the competent family man. Often it does not require any relationship skills at all.

When the marriage breaks up, the images are shattered. Powerlessness is one of the major frustrations experienced by men following marital separation. The competent father becomes a rejected lover, an insecure parent, and a powerless family head. Life becomes meaningless and lacking in coherence. The sense of having become powerless in the family comes partly through the inability to cope with the disruption of relationships, partly through the sense of incompetence about direct childcare, and partly because of the assumption, often proven correct, that the legal system will side with the wife, and that courts and lawyers will give little credence to the father's needs or wishes. Thus powerlessness vis a vis the ex-spouse and the courts combines with an emotional disenfranchisement in relation to their children. At present, the available social roles, as well as the norms enforced by the legal system, make the father into little beyond a provider and give minimal support to the role of the divorced father. The fathers themselves frequently lack the experiences necessary for parental functioning. To understand that lack, we must try to understand the pattern of male socialization which has been part of their development.

Male Socialization

In interviewing men about their parental families we found that the unavailability of the father either real or emotional was one of the most frequently mentioned family patterns. An adolescent boy learns that being emotionally unavailable is one of the expected masculine behaviors. Even when the son attempts to act differently from the father, he harbors a great deal of resentment. In a study of college seniors, lack of parental warmth headed a list of expressed dissatisfaction within the family (Komarovsky, 1976). Fathers were characterized as lacking in warmth, understanding and acceptance. And while the sons declared themselves closer in outlook to their fathers than to their mothers, one half of the men described the ties with their fathers as "neutral" or "strained." This combination of seeing themselves similar to the father, and yet resenting the father's behavior, makes many men insecure about their own family behavior and membership. The insecurity, in turn, makes them more vulnerable to feelings of guilt and inadequacy when the marriage breaks up.

Komarovsky (1976) reports that even in families which are close and stable, boys are neither encouraged nor expected to develop skills in dealing with relationships or emotions. Interpersonal skills are not expected outside of the home and an adolescent boy is plunged into activity with his peers as a way of becoming an independent male. If his father happens to be an individual who is sensitive to others and able to communicate his feelings, then he can become an important model. Boys who have had such fathers never fail to mention how important this relationship was during their growing years. But we know from our own study as well as from Komarovsky's data, that such fathers are not the rule. Most male children learned how to be adults outside of the family, that is where their achievement and adult activities are rewarded. Independence and achievement, the two prized accomplishments of adulthood, mean a gradual separation from the family.

Those who learn well their lessons how to be men, attempt to translate those qualities into aspects of interpersonal behavior when they form a family of their own. But the qualities needed to establish an intimate relationship differ from those leading to achievement and independence. Thus many men find that qualities which establish them as competent males may be in conflict with relational skills important to establishing intimacy with another. For example, many men view the maintenance of independence as antithetical to closeness: to be close means to be dependent and thus a degree of distance is kept from other family members. Competitiveness, dominance and authority are all aspects of the behavior of the achieving male which may be in conflict with establishing close family ties.

When our respondents described their early notions of being husbands and fathers it was clear that the emphasis on competence, self-sufficiency and the image of the strong, silent male were very present. Although they imagined that their wives would be sensitive to their needs, to understand and to care, few men imagined that discussions of emotional stages or admitting their own emotional needs was part of their role as husbands. The feeling of incompetence in the area of expressive behavior leads many men to ignore the emotional side of their lives and to pay little attention to their own emotional needs and to the needs of others. The extreme stress of marital breakup breaks open the dammed up feelings and makes it difficult to leave them unattended any longer. Marital separation may be especially stressful when father's occupational success which was thought to lead to family fulfillment instead brings marital breakdown. The most frequent and repeated theme stated by most men in our study was: "I worked so hard for success but now I have little to show for it."

Men at a point of marital separation find themselves in the following conflict: the unsettling of the marriage undermines their sense of self-esteem as competent males who can maintain a stable family, the loss of relationship with the wife and the potential loss of the children, added to a sense of powerlessness in the outside world of court and lawyers, all contribute to a disruption of images of masculinity. At the same time the practical needs of making a new home for themselves, force the men into activities which have been defined as "feminine."

This further adds to their sense of incompetence and deprivation. Many of our respondents moved to inadequate and poorly kept quarters which served to express their sense of deprivation.

We would expect that in order to repair their self-esteem the men would turn to the two areas of life from which men traditionally derive support and satisfaction: work and heterosexual activity, yet these may be severely limited by the new time commitments to children. One solution, of course, is to give up on the relationship with the children, and many men do just that. In fact, previous socialization for the traditional male roles may explain why men choose to follow this option, since rearing children is not part of their role expectations. Childcare, and especially the development of responsiveness to the emotional needs of children, may often be incongruent with previously learned successful masculine performance. For example, Veroff and Felt (1970) report a significant positive relationship between father's high achievement motivation and feelings of inadequacy in the parenting role as well as a negative orientation towards their pre-school children. In other words, when the marriage breaks up, men must decide whether they will attempt an active parenting role for which they are likely to have little support, little experience, few expectations and few structural means for role performance.

Active Male Parenting

Our interest in studying a group of men who remained in close contact with their children was an interest, in part, in observing a solution to the conflict between demands of the masculine role on one hand and the practical demands of parenting on the other. How did this group of active fathers experience childcare, and how did their commitment to the children affect the areas of their life? To find out we asked extensive questions about the details of the fathers' daily lives with their children as well as about the limitations that childcare placed on other aspects of their lives.

Our data suggests that childcare when undertaken as a major responsibility by full time, or joint custody fathers offered the men a way to reduce the demands of the traditional male role and provided a means for developing and expressing the qualities of emotional relatedness. For most of the men this process started within the marriage. Often under the pressures of women's liberation or simply because of the outside interests of their wives, the men found themselves pressed into childcare activities. To meet these demands, reluctantly in the beginning, many of the fathers had to begin to rearrange their priorities, taking time off work to put in their turn at the daycare center or prove their willingness to offer assistance to their wives. The actual participation in the family tasks of childrearing made many men well versed in the caring tasks. Tending babies, cooking and other household chores were no mystery to most of the men in our sample. Still they were not the ones who took major responsibility. As one father summarized it: "When I was married and we went out, my wife did most of the preparations. . . . Planning to go out was usually done on her initiative . . . I sort of would decide whether or not I had the time to go or not . . . When I separated it was very different. If I planned to go to the beach with the kids, I had to worry about buying food, preparing lunch, and deciding what beach to go to. I had to think about how I would care for them. How would I be with them? What if one wanted to go in the water and one didn't? It was a lot more responsibility and I felt pretty shaky."

When the marriage broke up, the insistance on continuing these family tasks was often a way for the men to continue asserting their importance in the family. The children served as an important tie to the past, a source of connectedness to the family and a source of reinforcement for a father who felt guilty or rejected by his spouse. Although many fathers worried whether their children would continue to love them, still the bond of parenthood was not easily disposed of. By continuing to care for the children the men could rise above their circumstances.

The needs of the children and the development of child centered awareness became the central significance of their post divorce parenting role. Childcare gave men a legitimate means for taking on a role that is generally less valued than continuing to be successful in the work world. It may be true that "the traditional males' role is in the occupational sector and it is not altered very much by either marriage or fatherhood" (Duberman, 1977, p. 148). It can be argued, however, that it is altered by divorce.

Fathering Involvement and Sex-Role Orientation

The fathers in the study were administered the Brim scale of Masculine-Feminine values and a sex-role inventory. A factor analysis of the responses to the instruction "describe the average American male" indicates that men in the sample share common views of the expected male role, regardless of their childcare involvement. It is a view that emphasizes dimensions of power and leadership, emotional detachment, vanity and financial responsibility. It indicates an acknowledgment on the part of these divorced and separated fathers as to what is traditionally expected of a male. When, however, we asked the men to rate themselves on the same scale, and to compare those results with the original ratings, we discovered that with increased involvement in childcare there was an increase in the differences from the previous scores. In other words, the more the fathers took care of their children the more they viewed themselves as different from the stereotype. Visiting fathers rated themselves very closely to their rating of the average male, joint custody fathers, however, and especially full-custody fathers' ratings indicated a sense of estrangement from the traditional expectations.

The differences did not take the new ratings in the direction of more feminine values as we might have expected, since childcare is usually identified with the tasks of women, but rather towards an emphasis of traits which, while still masculine, had a somewhat different configuration. For example, a factor of leadership which in the ratings for "average male" included such traits as "vain," "theatrical," and "dominant," was altered for the involved fathers to an emphasis on traits such as "responsibility," "responsive," and "attentive." These results give credence to our conclusions, supported by results of interviews, that the values which emerge through childcare involvement become integrated into the images of masculinity in such a way as to make these fathers feel "heroic" about their undertaking. The theme of heroism both from the fathers themselves and from the way they considered themselves perceived by others, often by women they became involved with, reappeared through the interview. In other words, the fathers who have the extra responsibilities of childcare feel overburdened and victimized. Fathers who undertake such childcare willingly and are able to integrate it into their total lives, feel good about their performance, and the childcare obligations become a legitimate limitation on the traditional male behavior while at the same time enhancing many of the respected but underused traits. As one of the interviewed fathers put it, "I always wanted to be like that (expressive and responsive) but I never had the excuse to do it." Assuming responsibility for the child as another job the man must do, provides the appropriate avenue for activating what might be a latent identity image of relatedness.

Changes in Role Requirements

To understand what specifically were the changes in the role requirements for part-time or full time fathers, we asked the men about the details of their childcare routine and the degree to which they felt prepared or comfortable performing the various household and child-rearing tasks. Most of the fathers in the sample reported feeling prepared for the routine of household tasks, indicating that they already participated in them during their marriages. However, calling babysitters, taking the child to the doctor or to birthday parties, were some of the less familiar duties. The fathers were not used to appearing in public as the caring parent, so trips to the PTA meeting, or to the house of the child's friend were fraught with discomfort not so much because the father himself was unwilling or unable to do it, but because many men felt that other parents looked at them askance in such situations. "I feel as if I am entering a woman's world," one of the fathers said. "I always worry that the babysitter or her mother think I am up to something funny," said another.

In the area of social life and work, childcare imposes severe limitations. As we observed before, involved fathers tend to make less money than could be expected for men at the same educational and professional level. This can be explained by the fact that they are reluctant to accept overtime, working fewer hours, limiting travel and transfers, and refusing lucrative promotions which would involve a disruption of their childcare schedules. This is especially true of joint custody fathers, whose childcare arrangements often require the good will of the ex-wife and some of whom lack the legal support for enforcing such arrangements if they are not convenient to the ex-spouse. These men cannot take their family with them when they move and thus must always weigh the advantages of a new work situation versus the possible disruption of their relationship with the children:

"When my wife left I got thrown into figuring out my life. I was trying to find my own sense of what was important to me, what were my values, what was the place of my job, my children and my relationships. I was finding out what was my real self. I was trying to convince myself that work was more important without understanding at that time the heavy feelings involved. Now, work is not so big a priority. Caring for Dan is more important."

Work still remains a significant aspect of the men's identity and an important source of satisfaction, but the priority of the childcare arrangement is a legitimate reason for resisting the demands of work. Generally while married, it is difficult for a man to refuse a promotion simply because he does not want to give all his energies to his work, or because of his family's resistance to his long working hours. He also may lose the respect of his co-workers. But a divorced father who can cite his custody agreement can more easily limit his work involvement in a way that he might have always wanted to in the past.

Social life is also curtailed, at least at first, by childcare. Many men, unwilling to take on new emotional commitments, can use their obligations to the children as a screen behind which they can recuperate emotionally without having to expose their vulnerability. Although dating increases after the first year, many fathers reported that after work and childcare they find little time to be alone or to have time for adult activities. This is different from the traditional role in an intact family, where the father's work obligations and often his leisure time activities take precedence over any relational needs of the family.

The limitations of childcare are twofold; on one hand the actual time and energy absorbed by the children creates an overload of demands, and work and social life must be limited. On the other hand, however, the newly developing relationship with the children provides much of the interpersonal rewards that men traditionally have gotten only from relating to other adults and rarely from children. In the area of work, the definition of childcare as a contractual obligation allows the father to view his newly acquired competence and skills as rewarding in the same way that any job well done enhances the self-image of men.

Childcare, then, when no longer engaged in by men as mother substitutes, but as primary parents, provides the satisfaction of both emotional relatedness and job competence which stand in for the rewards of work and romance and reduces the salience of these activities for the self-image of masculinity.

Men who are able to restructure their new lifestyle around their parenting relationships find a possibility of becoming less pressured by the traditional demands of a masculine role without having to give up any of the rewards that the successful fulfillment of that role provides. The development of a sense of competence and efficiency in parenting takes time for newly divorced fathers, even if they were involved with childcare prior to divorce, especially in the area of emotional care.

Relating to Children

Within a marriage the father's job, aside from routine household tasks, is usually that of a teacher or an entertainer vis a vis his children. This is the pattern that most men continue directly after separation. We have called this the "doing stage": the father's time with the children is spent pursuing activities often away from home. The entertainments focus the child's attention away from the father, thus reducing the requirement to be responsive, and lessens the amount of direct interaction between them. This allows the father to continue the kind of behavior that was most familiar when the family was still together. The activities also represent an attempt on his part to compensate to the child for the loss of the intact family. This type of interaction accentuates the image of the father as an effective provider. It can be maintained by the father who only sees his children weekends or holidays. This pattern soon wears out, however, for those fathers who engage in daily care. These men must face the emotional needs of their children sooner or later, and become comfortable with a different type of interaction. This transition we have called a change from "doing" to "being." The father who shopped, and cleaned the house, and lined up information about film times, because of his children, now becomes a much more relaxed parent who encourages the children to help him clean, gets their advice on the shopping, and may spend the time together reading side by side. Coming to terms with the emotional needs of children requires a new repertoire of skills for some men. "It's when she cries and I don't know what to do with her. I didn't understand it. So I would try to figure it out by trial and error. Did I do something bad? I go through a series of hypotheses. It took a while but I finally learned how to figure out what is bothering her. I feel a lot better now. I can get an idea what's upsetting her now. I also can get her to tell me what's wrong and I can generally do something about it." Another father in describing a similar problem experienced his own difficulties with expressing his feelings and related it to his family of origin: "I felt least prepared for dealing with their emotional needs and being open to what they were feeling. I was very inadequate in that I couldn't deal with my own feelings very well. I was afraid. I didn't know how to listen to them or how to respond to them. When I was growing up my father wouldn't allow me to cry or yell. . . ."

In the emotional arena, fathers initially had their greatest source of difficulty. This was reflected not only in their feeling incompetent but also in their inability to set limits consistently and dealing with issues of discipline. Many fathers seem to be giving too much power to their children in defining their activities, bed times and vaccilated in the establishment and enforcement of rules. They often seemed to look to their children to define for them these aspects of parenting. Although men are often expected to be the enforcers of rules in the nuclear family, they may not be the parent who directly sets up what is appropriate to expect from young children. When faced with the responsibility for defining appropriate behavior, they find themselves lacking the needed skills and tend to rely upon their children as guides. In this sense fathers give their children power to define this new aspect of their parent role.

Once the feelings of competence begin to be introduced into the area of dealing with children's emotions, reinforced by the child's well being, the whole area of emotions becomes less threatening for men. Each father can develop his own criteria for doing a good job as a father in the way he relates to his children. This shift is reported by men after two years after separation and reflects a change not only in feeling more competent but also a shift in parenting styles.

Settling Down to Parenting

In the second year of separation fathers reported a lessening in their overly concerned fears of having to make up to their children for the loss of the nuclear family. The period of crisis has passed and the mutual needs of parent and child are more legitimate. "I'm more collected, calmer and more at peace with the kids. There's a relaxed sense that if all doesn't go well, there's always tomorrow. I'm still somewhat anxious about the future but not fearful about the children." With increased experience and the development of competence, fathers showed a more balanced approach to parenting. They were more concerned with setting limits, establishing routines and enforcing rules. There was a clearer sense of boundaries between generations than in the beginning of separation. "In the past I fell into doing too much nurturing and not getting my own needs met. Now I'm better able to establish limits and find it easier to tell my kids that I need to be alone or I got to be with adults." The adjustment might go in the other direction: "I have become more open to her when she needs me rather than when I finish what I'm doing when she may not need me to be open anymore. I'm better at giving her the cues that say it's OK to interrupt me if it's important to her. It has to do with the just-a-minute syndrome; wait till I'm finished. I am much clearer at giving signals that make a distinction between what I really have to finish and will not be interrupted and when I want to be with her together, together."

Cooperative Parenting

Cooperative parenting and divorce appear at first glance to be a contradiction in terms. Yet many of the divorced parents in our study found that marital separation could function to enhance parenting in the following two ways: each parent can relate directly to the child without being monitored by the other parent, and secondly each parent is entitled to assert equity in having both the right and responsibility to participate in decisions affecting the child. These decisions ranged from health care and education to the daily scheduling of time or activities. Any problems that the child is experiencing become of concern to both parents and must be addressed by both. Thus post-divorce parenting supports both the autonomous relationship with the child for each parent and an explicit expression of shared concern.

Over the course of the post-separation years this balanced arrangement was clearly achieved by many of the men in our subsample. The longer the period of separation the more stable the cooperative structure becomes. The structure of the joint custody reinforces the strength of the cooperative relationship. The single parent fathers differ in the degree to which they include, or rely upon, their ex-wives depending on their views of the women as adequate parents. The men who viewed their former spouses as adequate maintained a stable cooperative parenting arrangement with them. Where single parent fathers reported that their ex-spouses were inadequate parents, post-divorce parenting was marked by discord and a gradual curtailment of visits between mother and children.

Three major factors were identified as contributing to the success of cooperative parenting: the ability to separate the role of the husband from the role of the father, the recognition of mutual rights and contributions as parents to the welfare of the children, and the use of non-adversary conflict reduction mechanisms. Divorce is inevitably fraught with conflict and battles are fought over money, property, differences in world views and desired lifestyles. Yet many men in our study were able to describe their ex-spouses as "good parents" regardless of being engaged in these conflicts. Not only is the spouse viewed as a positive figure for the child, but the fathers believe that this view was reciprocated. They are reassured by the conviction that they themselves are seen as "good parents" by their children's mother.

This mutual reinforcement of parental roles appears to survive period of intense marital and post-marital hostility: "Sometimes I feel like she should just drop dead or get out of my life for good . . . Yet, she's still Jim's mother and she is good to him."

Among joint custody fathers, where frequent communication between the parents is often required, there is a strictly adhered to dichotomy between the personal contact between the couple in conflict and their parental contact. Discussio about the children, sharing of information, and decisions affecting the children are kept separate from discussions about conflictual marriage issues. Over time, most of the contact became centered around parenting. Parenting is reinforced when the two adults are able to be mutually supportive, and conflict is often deliberately reduced in order not to disturb that equilibrium. Thus, the focus on parenting has effects on emotional distance between the ex-spouses and permits parental interaction.

Full custody fathers, whose contact with ex-spouses was less routinized, were not as able to make this distinction. They were more likely to attempt to reduce conflict by reducing the frequency of face to face interactions. Since some of the mothers without custody lived some distance away, children can visit their mother without the father attending. Men who lived in close proximity to the houses of their ex-wives decide over time to pick up the children from school and return them to school rather than from the mother's house. Using the telephone or even writing, instead of meeting in person to discuss matters of conflict, is another way of reducing possible tensions.

In the same way that a regular schedule of childcare time helped the fathers to organize their lives, regular scheduled interaction with the other parent, i.e., weekly phone or bi-weekly phone conversations, helped to maintain the cooperative structure on an even keel. When conflict becomes unavoidable the possibility of using third parties, such as social workers, childcare workers, counselors or psychologists, or even trusted friends, as opposed to the adversary system of courts or lawyers, is very important in containing the unresolved and potentially hurtful elements of the marital relationship. The mediators are most useful when they can be defined as advocates for the welfare of the child. When agreement cannot be reached easily these mediators are sometimes given the power to make decisions for the parents. The not infrequent use of such mediation in our sample is a measure of the commitment of the parents to continuing their relationship around the interests of their offspring, and the desire to continue such a relationship in spite of its pitfalls.

The commitment to continuing a cooperative parenting arrangement is clear from the interviews. When asked about the parenting arrangement which would be most personally satisfying to the fathers regardless of practical considerations, the majority of the full and joint custody fathers expressed a preference for a cooperative parenting structure. They have become convinced that they, as well as their children, truly benefit from an uninterrupted, predictable and well-meant contact with both parents. This commitment described a group of men for whom a sense of family ties and loyalties supercedes consideration of personal concerns. It is this emphasis on family ties that enables the men to deal constructively with marital conflicts.

Conclusion

Cooperative parenting between former spouses has both social and psychological consequences. While mothers have been viewed traditionally as organizing both their practical lives and their personalities around the structural needs of childcare, little has been observed about the effects of childcare on the lifestyles and personalities of men. In this study we have viewed the undertaking of childcare responsibilities by fathers as a principle of organization for the fathers' work commitment and social life. We have also commented on the effects on the men's lives of changing the priorities from work to family needs. Additionally, cooperative parenting serves to alter the pattern of post-divorce conflict, and the parenting function becomes also an organizing principle for developing mechanisms to reduce conflict, and define new bases for stable interaction.

When the ex-spouses redefine each other as parents instead of lovers or intimates, it allows them to focus on more functional or positive aspects of their relationship than those which contributed to the break up of the marriage. This refocusing, provides for emotional distance and the possibility of third party mediation. With time, as the parenting functions become routinized, the sense of mutual trust and reinforcement tends to increase. Father who have been engaged in cooperative parenting describe their ex-spouses in more positive terms than do recently separated men. As cooperative parenting continues, ex-spouses are more likely to view each other as a beneficial resource, both for information about children and actual assistance. "My wife is clearly like a distant member of our family even though the kids see her only on every other weekend. She will call up and we'll talk about the kids. Often she's more objective and I have learned to really listen to her even if I don't always act on it right away."

The continued relationship is particularly evident in the residence pattern of cooperating parents (most living within a half an hour or less driving distance from each other) and the acceptance of mutual interdependence which no longer imposes a sense of personal limitation: "We are both mutually tied to each other not by marriage but by our values . . . we have voluntarily held out for our kids . . . We live our own lives but when it comes to the kids we both pull our share. . . . It hasn't been easy but it works pretty well now."

For practical as well as psychological reasons, cooperative parenting following divorce may not be possible for all couples with children whose marriages dissolve. The fact, however, that such arrangements can develop, and be maintained as an alternative to parental absence and the pressures of single, unsupported parenting by a lone adult, is most encouraging and should be looked at more closely as one way to alleviate the many problems which beset both parents and children following divorce.

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Divorce, Marital Conflict, and the Mental Health of Children: Findings from a National Survey of Children

Nicholas Zill

Nicholas Zill, Ph.D., senior staff scientist with the Foundation for Child Development and project director of the Foundation's national survey of children, is a research psychologist and specialist in the measurement of social trends. Dr. Zill's book on the national survey will be published in the near future.

Last night Urie Bronfenbrenner gave us a vision that things might be getting better in family life in the United States. I have a somewhat different vision of the brave new world that's ahead for children. I think more and more children will be raised by neither parent but by interactive television sets, computer-controlled, which will be programmed according to principles laid down by Urie Bronfenbrenner, Mavis Hetherington, and other child-development psychologists. So the child will switch on the TV and see a wonderful neighborhood that is technically diverse, safe, green, with friendly grandfather figures who say "HO HO HO, HI there little tike. Nice to have you in the neighborhood." And you'll get reinforcing statements such as "Mr. Rogers, I think you're special." "I'm o.k., you're o.k., Mommy and Daddy are o.k. wherever they are." Or, à la Duke Ellington, "We love you madly, we couldn't love you more madly." Meanwhile, the parents will be totally free to go and actualize themselves and achieve multi-orgasmic fulfillment in the chic downtown apartments furnished by Bloomingdales, Conran's, what have you. And of course, these computers will be programable to produce a father figure that is either masculinizing, feminizing or androgynizing, depending on your preference. All those of you who are interested in investing in this scheme please meet me afterwards.

I would like to talk today about some results from a national survey of children which was not really focused on divorce per se. I would like to highlight a puzzling aspect of our knowledge concerning the effects of marital conflict and divorce on children -- that is, the discrepancy between the clinical perspective and the findings of many field research studies.

Virtually all professionals who have worked with children involved in family disruptions can cite dramatic examples of emotional disturbance and behavioral problems that seem clearly linked to the family break-up. And indeed in the national survey sample, you could certainly find many cases like that. On the other hand, many field research studies show only weak links between the parent marital status and childhood behavior problems and often the differences seem due as much to socio-economic conditions as to the marital situation per se. How do we resolve the discrepancy between the two and integrate the viewpoints of the clinician and the survey researcher?

One obvious explanatory factor is the limited sample of children that clinicians and other professionals see. They come in contact with the children who have the problems and not so much with those who don't. The extent to which sampling effects of the sort can change your conclusion is illustrated in what I call "the Ann Landers effect." As you know, the advice columnist Ann Landers invited her readers who had children to write in and say in retrospect if they had it to do over again, would they indulge in parenthood. Her results, which were announced in a nationally-syndicated magazine article, showed that a substantial majority of parents said no -- that they would not do it over again, thank you. Yet when we repeated the same question in the national survey asking parents, primarily mothers of 7-11 year old kids, nearly 90% of the mothers said yes indeed they would do it over again and most of them felt quite strongly about it and positively and felt their children had made their lives better and made them better persons. Now, our figure may well be on the high side in the positive direction, but the true situation is clearly nowhere as dismal as the state of affairs as described by Ann Landers. The disgruntled and unhappy are much more likely to write in or otherwise volunteer a response than are the contented and problem-free.

There is also a related consideration that we tried in much of our research dealing with behavioral problems, unfortunately still to find simple yes-no answers to behavioral questions that cannot and should not be answered in such terms. Does divorce have a detrimental effect on kids or doesn't it? We reach a conclusion and tend to generalize to all children in all situations. We think in physical science terms, cause and effect, action and reaction.

Yet we all know that human behavior and child development are affected by a multitude of factors operating simultaneously, and the appropriate answers are probablistic rather than deterministic in a Newtonian sense. We often recognize this but we really don't pay enough attention to it, in doing research, building theories and making policy prescriptions.

In the matter of divorce, an answer to the general questions about the effects of divorce should really be "It depends, and we really don't know; it depends on what kind of divorce it is: a tranquil arrangement in which the interests of the children are one of the foremost considerations, or a rancorous battle in which the children are considered part of the spoils. It depends on the resilience and the personal strengths of the children as well as the parents involved. It depends on the circumstances, the age of the child, the economic resources of the family, the stability of the child's home environment after the divorce, supports which are provided by the departed parent, by relatives and friends. It depends on peer influence upon the child, the mores, the laws and the policies of the community and the society in which the divorce occurs."

Now, what we have to do is to try and find answers to the questions of why some children show profound negative affects and others very little - which involves specifying how the risk is modified by various characteristics of the child, the parents and their relationship and what can be done to reduce the risks to the child. The answers to these questions are not going to be gotten from a hodgepodge of little studies using a variety of concepts, measurement techniques and largely unrepresentative samples. I think that answering these questions requires larger-scale collaborative research that makes use of standard definitions, comparable interview and behavior observation techniques and sophisticated analysis techniques.

Now, as I said, the national survey of children was not primarily a study of divorce and children per se. One of the things we wanted to do was to get a national representative sample of kids and get their viewpoints - not only on their marital and family situations but also on other aspects of their lives, such as their schools, their neighborhoods or what they fear and worry about and what makes them angry. A lot of polls get the viewpoints of adults and even adolescents, but children are treated in most surveys as property of the household. The census counts them along with the number of TV sets and automobiles, etc. We hear very rarely from the children. There are some reasons for this. Children tend to be somewhat more unreliable as respondents than adults do. But one of the things we set out to do was to show that in fact you could get useful results by talking to the kids themselves. We covered 2,301 children in some 1700 households. The fieldwork was done by the Institute for Survey Research at Temple University in September through December, 1976. All the children were in the age range of 7-11 years. It was conducted in 289 listing areas, selected from 86 primary sampling locations around the country. We talked to as many as two children in a household. If there were more than two children in the eligible age range, we selected two randomly and we talked to a parent - who tended to be the mother because we selected the best-informed legal guardian. We also did a follow-up study in the schools. We got permission from the household to contact the schools in 92% of the cases. The cooperation from the schools was a little more difficult to obtain, and so in roughly 75% of the samples we also had parallel information from the teachers. The advantages of a large survey like this are that you have large numbers, although in some cases, in rare situations, such as father-custody cases, you wish you had even larger numbers. It is representative of the variety of the United States - the cultural variety, the educational, geographic and income variety.

This is a heterogeneous country, and sweeping generalizations are usually wrong. There are still kids out there who collect eggs from the barnyard as well as those whose main chore is sweeping off the suburban swimming pool. It depends mostly on verbal reports. We did get verbal reports from the child, from the parent, from the teachers and also some observations from the interviewer.

This is not always an advantage from the point of view of simplicity of results. As they say in the Census Bureau "If you count a population once, you know how many people there are; if you count it more than once, you're never sure." I won't go into a large demographic breakdown, except to say that 71% of the 7-11 year olds in the United States are living in the "normal" situation with both biological parents. More than one quarter in 1976 were not in that "normal" arrangement. When you ask, though, if they are living with happily-married biological parents, the figure then at least by one definition goes down to 48%, less than half. We did in fact ask the parent respondent if you consider your marriage very happy, fairly happy or not too happy. I'm not going to go into a discussion of whether that is a correct perception or a cynical kind of thing revealing that most people are not very happily married - just to say that most surveys find that same result even if you give them little slips of paper and say "Here ... and pass it back to me." They still say that they are happy with their marriage. Even given that, if you look at it from the perspective of children in the United States, less than one half are living with both biological parents who are very happily married. For Black children, we really have achieved some kind of brave new world: only 40% of Black elementary school children are living with both biological parents and only 20% are living with both biological parents in a happy marriage. There is considerable variation across the different kinds of communities in this country. In inner-city slums, 42% of kids are living with both biological parents;

in affluent suburbs it goes up to almost three quarters; and in extreme rural areas it's 80%. The best place for marital stability is not in the small towns out in the country, but out there in the boondocks. This is true also for Black children: in inner-city ghettos, it was 28% with both biological parents, whereas in suburban Black families the majority of the kids are living with both of their parents.

Income and education are very closely intertwined with the marital situation and with the situation in which the child is living. So, contrary to our typical expectations of divorce being the Hollywood, high-status kind of things, it's the kids whose parents did not complete high school who are much more likely to be living in a non-standard family situation than kids of parents with more education. Of the children in families with incomes of $5,000 or less, 77% are in a broken home. When you go up to incomes of above $25,000, only 16% of the children are not living with both biological parents. So it's wrong to think about divorce as a province of the rich kids. You should be thinking in terms of steelworker's wives, with less than secretarial skills, who are living in very marginal circumstances. Furthermore, in the Black child population, you are not talking very much about divorce at all. You're talking about many mothers who are separated on a permanent basis or who have never married. Again, most never-married mothers in this country are Black, high school drop outs. It's very rare that you find the Vassar girl with an independent income who has decided on feminist terms to raise her child on her own. Actually I wish we had more of them in the sample because they are a nice control factor and what you try to do when you're looking at cross-sectional data is to control for some of the other correlates. Some of the strongest ones are education and income. Controlling for the parents' education is fairly straight-forward. Controlling for income is a little trickier because although some of the results that I have described to you have been controlled for income, I think in some cases we have over-controlled. Income is so tightly related to marital status in this country that you have a problem which is technically called multi-co-linearity. If you control for income, you reduce the effects of marital status, but if you control for marital status you reduce the effects of income. That's how tightly related it is. One of the things that is needed in future research is more concentration on those liberated women who are raising children on their own but in good economic circumstances, because that helps to clarify to what extent poverty is a factor and to what extent it is the parental status.

I want to talk about first of all the apparent effects on children of different arrangements. We are going to be looking not only at separated, divorced, never-married, and widowed, which are single parent kinds of things, but also at the children of different marital situations, and basically using the questions about family arguments and about the self-described happiness of the marriage. I talk about kids in very happy marriages, fairly happy, and not-so-happy marriages, and also children of re-marriage, children with a mother and step-father or with the father and a step-mother, which is much less common.

Is divorce or separation a source of childhood stress? Usually you would think of it as a stressful experience for children. According to parents in a national survey, which is often but not invariably the case, we asked all the parents if anything ever happened to seriously upset or disturb Johnny or Linda or whoever. Thirty-seven percent of the parents said yes and then they were asked what the upsetting event was and what had happened. If we list all the types of events that parents mentioned as being stressful for kids, separation and divorce is the second leading cause of childhood upset and disturbance after the death of a grandparent or other relative.

Children from divorced families are significantly more likely to have been seriously upset or disturbed by something, often of course the divorce itself, than children from happily married families. Fifty-one percent of children from divorced households were reported to have experienced a disturbing event compared to 35% of kids from very happy marriages. It's perhaps noteworthy, 49% of the children of divorce were reported not to have been seriously disturbed by the divorce or by any other occurence that the parents could recall. It's certainly noteworthy that children from not-too-happy marriages were almost as likely to have had a traumatic experience as children of divorce - 46% were reported to have had such an experience. The leading cause of their trauma was marital discord. Now this question of "Has anything ever happened?" is a little tricky because it is dependent upon the interpretation and the recall of the parent respondent. It turns out that parents with more education and higher incomes are more likely to report a stressful experience, because they are more aware and tuned in on their child psychology and more psychologically oriented (which I believe is the reason) than those with less education and less income even though the environment of lower income kids would be more stressful. But even when controlling for those factors, we still find that in fact it makes divorce look even more stressful and it makes unhappy marriages look more stressful, it increases the distance between the marital status groups instead of decreasing it.

Are children of divorce more likely to need professional help for emotional and behavioral problems? Divorce does not inevitably lead to psychological problems in the children and most behavior problems in children do not come from marital disruptions. According to parent reports in the survey, just under 7% of American children have received counseling or psychiatric care at some time in their lives within this age range. A majority of the children who have seen a psychiatrist or psychologist come from intact families (61%). If we look at whether the child needed help in this last year, 8% of all children in this age group have had an emotional, behavioral, mental or learning problem within the previous year, serious enough so the parent felt or was told by someone, like a teacher, that the child needed professional help even though the parent may not have actually gotten that help. A majority of these children, 53%, come from marriages which the parent described as very happy. However, the proportion of children who now have or have had psychological problems is significantly higher among children of divorce than from among children of intact families. Fourteen percent of youngsters in divorced households were described as needing professional help during the last year, in contrast to the 6% of children who needed help in households where both original parents are present. Thirteen percent of kids with a divorced parent have actually seen a psychologist or psychiatrist at some time comparted to 5.5% of children living with both mother and father. These differences are statistically significant and they hold up when disparities of income and education are taken into account. They are practically important. They suggest that a child has twice the risk of needing psychological help if he's gone through a divorce than if the parents have remained together. But the differences are by no means as striking as might be expected by those who hold the traditional view that divorce is the worst possible occurence for a developing child's mental health. This is a widely held view. My mother believed it. The former Secretary of HEW believes it. Lots of people do. Indeed a critic of this view could well look at this evidence and point out that the vast majority of children in divorced households, 80%, did not need help in the last year and have never seen a psychologist or psychiatrist.

What about children of parents who have divorced and remarried? What can we say about the need for help in these children? If we look at mother/step-father households, we find that there is a relatively high proportion of 13%, that have seen a psychologist or psychiatrist at some point in their lives. This is not surprising since most of these children have been through a divorce. What is surprising is the extremely high proportion of such children, nearly 1 out of 5, who were described as needing help for an emotional, behavior, mental or learning problem during the past year. This is more than three times the proportion of children needing help in mother/father households. It is also significantly higher than the proportion of children living with mother alone, or with mother and other adult relatives. Does this mean that when a divorced mother remarries it has no beneficial effects for her children's mental health, and that it only creates additional adjustment problems for the children? Certainly not. If nothing else, having a man in the house usually means a higher family income and greater financial security for mother and children. Furthermore, the observed differences may be due to other factors, such as the age of the child when the disruption of the original marriage occurs. For most of the kids who were in step-father households, the marriage has been at a significantly younger age than those who were still in divorced or separated situations. Once again remember, we are talking about the size of a minority. The majority of kids in step-father households, 76.5%, did not require help last year and had never seen a psychiatrist or a psychologist.

What about kids who are living with their father, but not their mother? This is a very small group in our sample, unfortunately so because it is quite interesting. They also show a very high incidence of needing or having received psychological care. Systematic analysis of the various factors that might contribute to this is not really possible with such a small sample. However, if you look over the questionnaires on a case by case basis, it is not as if the mother and father of these children sat down and rationally decided that it was the best thing for the child to live with the father. Rather they had a custody fight or there was outright rejection of the child by the mother or the child was shuttled from household to household. One poignant example was a little girl who was living with her father and a step-mother when we got to the household through the survey, and she had previously lived with her mother and a stepfather. She talked a good deal about her real mother during the interview. When we asked her, "Who's the person you're most afraid of?" she said "My stepfather." By the time we got on to doing the school follow-up study 6 months later, the teacher told us that the child was now living with the grandparents during the week and going to alternate mother-stepfather, father-stepmother households on different weekends. This may be the pattern of the future in children's living arrangements. In any event, both of the step-parent situations do show significantly higher need for and use of psychiatric care.

What about the notion that if a mother has other adults in the household it is beneficial for the kids: for example, if there is a grandmother or grandfather around. The survey data provide absolutely no support for this idea. Basically there are small differences, but they tend to favor the mother alone rather than the mother with other relatives in the household. Now, once again, there are confounding differences, and we did not test for not having a relative in the neighborhood who could help out. We are talking about households essentially where the mother is living with her own parents. And those kids did not seem any better off than when the mother was alone.

Of course, we can't just look at the need for psychiatric care, because all children who have emotional and behavioral problems do not receive psychotherapy. In the words of one parent in the survey, who explained why the family had not gotten help for their kid, even though the child's teacher had recommended it, the parent said, "We thought it was the teacher who was the crazy one." Parents of children with behavior problems do not necessarily get told that their children need professional help, and even though the acceptability of psychiatric care for children has been growing, there still are many families for whom it is not acceptable and the availability of such services varies a lot from community to community. I think it's particularly ironic when you see theses like Christopher Lash's that the family is now dominated by outside experts and you realize how much residual reluctance to seek professional help there is in this country. Our measures of psychological help are only a partial indicator. We also got behavior ratings from both parent and teacher using a range of items that was suggested by previous researchers such as Rutters and Kelam Gersten, Langner. Both the parent and teacher rating tell a similar story (the teacher's rating was more strikingly so tha the parents) - namely that kids in divorced households do tend to show more behavior problems particularly of an agressive sort and of the hyperactive, having problems paying attention, keeping still. The effects are markedly reduced when you control for income and education, but they are still significant. But you also have significant effects on the kids in not-so-happy marriages and fairly happy marriages, who also have significantly more behavior problems. And a similar story is told by the children themselves. We asked the kids about getting into a fight at school last week, pretending to be sick when you really weren't sick, and doing bad things in general. The self-reported misbehavior of children also shows significantly more among children of unhappy marriages and of children of separation and divorce.

What about the kids themselves? In their reactions, in their expressions of their emotions - what differences do you see? You find that a lot of the things that we assume are not the case. For example, children of divorce are not more likely to report frequent boredom, loneliness, or other negative emotions than children in intact families. The same is true for children in the other single-parent situations. They don't differ in their positive or negative feelings about school work, nor in self-esteem. There are some weak differences but they don't hold up when you control for income and education. However, there are differences among marital groups in the children's perceptions and middle class than the permanently separated mother or the never-married or widowed mother, when asked about family activities, reports as much family activity in terms of going out with the children, taking the kids to the movies, doing something for the kids, buying something for the kids as in happy marriages. Whereas the widows or the never-married don't report as much family activity. But even if she isn't doing all that, it is clear that there is a pattern where the mother is going out and trying to be a good parent. She's working, under a lot of pressure, much more likely to say that she feels rushed all the time; and even though her financial situation may be somewhat better than the mother who's never married, she has more money worries because she has higher aspirations. I think the point from Rainwater's book about what your aspirations are, is very much relevant. The never-married, separated mother often who is receiving money from welfare even though she would like to work, is more likely to say she has time on her hands that she doesn't know what to do with, rather than feeling always pressed for time. But, once again, when you look at tension and depression, when you look at money worries, when you look at time pressure, women in not-too-happy marriages also have a lot of this negative aspect. Happiness of a marriage is related when you look across the country to the financial circumstances and the employment situation of the father.

There is one other area where marital disruption and unhappy marriages has an effect that is on the perceived efficacy as a parent. How good a parent do you think you are? Do you ever lose control of your feelings and feel you might hurt your child? Would you do it over again? There is a tendency in divorced, separated and unhappy marriages for there to be more mothers to say they would not do it over again, who reject their children and who feel as Mavis Hetherington was discussing, that they are losing control, that they are not very effective as a parent. When you put these different factors into predictive equations to predict the kids' problems, the money worries and the time pressures seem to be

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feelings about their parents and about the treatment they receive at home. Kids from differnt family types differ on a cluster of responses which we call the perceive-rejection index. A child who scores high on this index showed the following pattern of responses. He or she said "I wish my mother would spend more time with me." Or "I wish my father would spend more time with me" (if there is a father). "My mother makes fun of me as a punishment." "My mother says she doesn't love me as a punishment." He doesn't think his mother or father is proud of him. He says his mother treats him more like a baby than a grown-up and reports being spanked and yelled at. Now only a tiny monority of children report all these perceptions or feelings about their parents, fortunately. But the proportion who do is higher in some family types than in others. Kids in divorce and separated situations are more likely to report these feelings of rejection. However, children from unhappy marriages show an even higher average score on this perceive-rejection index. If we could equalize parent education and income levels, children of divorce and separation would be significantly better off than children from not-too-happy marriages and about the same in terms of feeling rejection as children from fairly happy marriages. The highest levels of perceived rejection are in children living with never-married mothers, where it's not just the never-married, but where it's also low income and low education households.

So these are some of the differences we see. Now, very quickly, relating this to differences in the parent environment. You've had amply documented that poverty or at least reduction in the standard of living goes along with marital breakdown. Furthermore, we found when we asked about mother's money worries, frequency of money worries and sense of economic wellbeing, that an effect remained even when you controlled for the real income differences. You have a pattern something like this. I want to talk about money worries, time pressures, tension and depression. The divorced mother who tends to be somewhat more less important than this perceived sense of control and efficacy as a parent. This seems to be the strongest in a multivariot prediction situation. But the results certainly do suggest that conflict in a marriage, a history of conflict, and the mother's wellbeing is important for the child's mental health.

To summarize, divorce significantly increases a child's risk of developing emotional and behavior problems. Children whose parents have been divorced by the time the child is in grammar school are twice as likely to need or have gotten psychiatric help as children in intact families. They are more likely to have had a seriously disturbing experience either due to the divorce itself or to other life circumstances preceeding or following the divorce. The minority of children who exhibit aggressive or anti-social behavior at home, in school or in play, is larger among children of divorce than among children of intact families. Children of divorce are also more likely to feel rejected by their parents. But marital discord also significantly increases a child's risk of developing emotional and behavior problems. Children in marriages described by the parents as not too happy are even more likely to feel rejected, and they have elevated risks of being upset, showing aggressive behavior and needing or receiving psychological counseling. Many children get through a divorce without being upset or disturbed by it and apparently without developing emotional or behavior problems, at least not by the time they are 7 - 11. We need to know more about why some children do and others do not develop psychological disturbances. Based on the current findings, the degree of conflict between the parents and the mother's adjustment to the post-divorce situation seem to be important. But obviously other factors need to be explored as well.

Those who favor the father not being involved after a divorce are getting their wish in America today in the sense that roughly speaking only about 40% of the kids in divorce situations see their fathers regularly. In separated households, many of whom you will recall are in permanent separation, only about one-third of the kids see their fathers regularly. When you get down to never-married, there is one in five that sees his father on a regular basis. So we are developing this no-fault fatherhood in America, and it seems (strictly on parental responsibility terms) a rather appalling situation.

Furthermore, once again, we just can't limit our discussions to divorce, because many kids, particularly poor or black youngsters, have parents who have not been through a divorce, but are simply separated or never married. These are among the children who seem to have the greatest need for help but often are not getting that help.

A final point is that the data in the survey do not contradict the belief that the best thing for a child's mental health is to have 2 parents who remain together in a happy marriage. I think it's important to keep this in mind when we try to formulate research and policies to help children who must grow up in other situations. We should be asking ourselves not only how we can alleviate the plight of the single mother and divorced mother, but how we can help ensure that future generations of American children will not just get the interactive television sets, but will have the maximum possible number of years of happily married parenting.